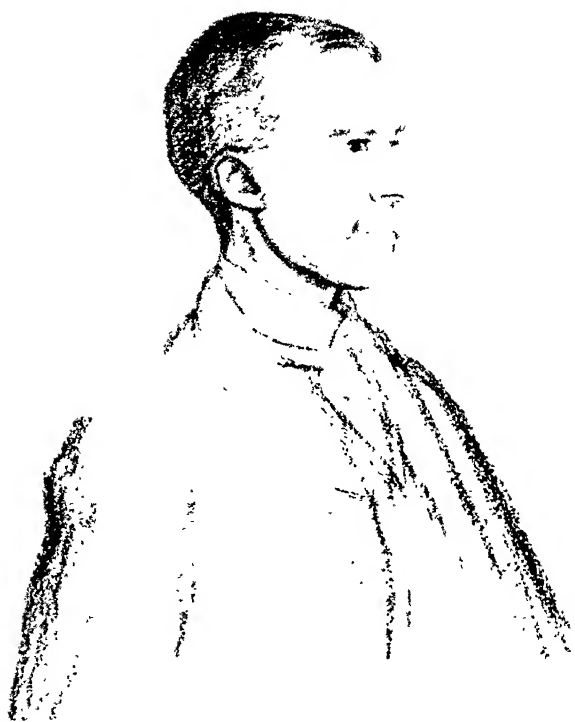


H O U S M A N

1897-1936



ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN, 1906

From a drawing by William Rothenstein

In the possession of Trinity College, Cambridge

H O U S M A N

1897—1936

By Grant Richards

*With an Introduction by
Mrs. E. W. Symons
and Appendices by
G. B. A. Fletcher and Others*

*The stars have not dealt me the worst they could do:
My pleasures are plenty, my troubles are two.
But oh, my two troubles they reave me of rest,
The brains in my head and the heart in my breast.*

'ADDITIONAL POEMS' XVII.

Oxford University Press

New York

1942

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Printed in the United States of America

TO
MY WIFE
WHO SHARED WITH ME
ALFRED HOUSMAN'S
FRIENDSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

by MRS. E. W. SYMONS

IN compiling this memoir of my brother A. E. Housman, Mr. Grant Richards has made accuracy his foremost aim. Every fact not drawn from his personal knowledge or direct from letters has been carefully verified, and as a biographical revelation of the remarkable scholar and poet who was associated with him in business or friendship for nearly forty years his book covers new ground.

The memoir is valuable as providing not a complete biography of A. E. Housman but a nearly complete biography of his poems; indeed, it was largely due to Mr. Richards that the first book of poems became alive in the publishing world. Undoubtedly more speculation has been current concerning the psychological origin of the poems than about anything else that concerns the poet and scholar. Psychological causes are deep-seated and private; in the case of A. E. Housman they can only be judged by the fullest possible knowledge of his private life in the years when his character and conduct were in formation. Except by hearsay, that knowledge does not belong to Mr. Richards, whose association with my brother began after his first characteristic book of poems *A Shropshire Lad* had been published in the fourth decade of his life. No one outside the three surviving companions of A. E. Housman's boyhood can disclose events which in early life shaped his future. As one of the three I am glad of this opportunity to preface Mr. Richards's recollections and observations by a simple narrative of my brother's early troubles which have given ground for much unnecessary and mistaken conjecture.

In self-remembrance A.E.H. has mentioned 'the great and real troubles' of his early manhood; and of his verse

he has written: 'Out of a stem that scored the hand I wrung it in a weary land' (*A Shropshire Lad*, No. LXII). The whole tone of his poetry and the aloof manner of life which he mostly led made criticizing minds persistently question what shocks or blows had fallen on him to divert him from the normal paths of social life. Incredulity followed plain statements by those who knew that nothing more devastating befell him than severe home troubles and a personal scholastic disaster of the first magnitude to him. I may be able to set my brother's memory free from erroneous conjectures by a definite statement of the troubles that did nearly wreck his career at its beginning, and did permanently affect his future for both good and ill.

Nothing but happy prospects had faced my brother till his mother's lamentable death took place on his twelfth birthday, depriving him of a guide and counsellor who was never replaced. From that time he became his own counsellor, confiding to no one his mental troubles or ambitions. He told no one in those days that the religion faithfully taught him by his mother had failed him and that he had substituted for it a moral code that he found preferable. His naturally kind and sensitive nature continually revolted against all the forms of cruelty that he discovered in the world, and for many of them he came to lay the blame on God more than on man—so long as his belief in God lasted. It was a great conflict that waged in him, with his intense love for the beauties of nature which obviously were not made by man. Never did he say a word about these troubles of his heart to any of us until it was said in his poems, and avowed in his old age. In old age he named his thirteenth year as the beginning of his change of belief; but I can testify that change of belief did not impair the goodness and rectitude of his conduct. Among the qualities of his youth were cleanliness, fastidiousness, truthfulness, and self-restraint. Of these I should put self-restraint as the habit which most affected his character. His self-contained broodings led to repressions in several directions, mani-

fested in increasing reticence as he grew older. Repression in the battles of adolescence must have played a part in the formation of his character, and certainly that was a direction in which he kept a restraining hold on himself. One of the earliest of his poems, 'The Sage to the Young Man' (*More Poems*, No. IV) expresses something of the turmoil of his experiences at that stage in his development, and no other poem of his in his notebooks was so often revised and re-written. No. VI of *More Poems*, also, gives a revealing outline of his youth as seen by himself in retrospect:

I to my perils
Of cheat and charmer
Came clad in armour
By stars benign.
Hope lies to mortals
And most believe her,
But man's deceiver
Was never mine.

The thoughts of others
Were light and fleeting,
Of lovers' meeting
Or luck or fame.
Mine were of trouble,
And mine were steady,
So I was ready
When trouble came.

It seems evident that the repressions of my brother's early life produced recognizable psychological results, particularly after his energies became concentrated on one great object. Aldous Huxley¹ may be quoted for the suggestion that 'excessive repression of the sexual impulses tends, by some obscure mechanism of compensation, to produce an excessive development of pride and ambition'. It is an observation that exactly fits the example in my brother. In his case, one consequence, presumably caused

¹ See the *News Chronicle*, November 25, 1936: 'What has happened to the Prudes?', by Aldous Huxley.

by deflected instincts, was the definite production in him of a form of sex-antagonism, not absolute, but always ready to incline him to belittle the opposite sex because he felt himself superior—very often quite untruly. His conception of virtue was certainly something much wider than sex-integrity, indeed I think he despised that aspect of it as belonging to the lowest and most obvious plane of morality. Morality itself, he contended, did not need Christianity for its practice.

My brother chose to be perverse in many opinions that he expressed, but those of his critics who probe into his past, certain that it must contain a period of bitter emotional experience, miss the mark if they think that any incident in his life needs concealment.

The actual blow that damaged A. E. Housman's life was his blamable failure in the Final Schools at Oxford, for blamable it was that, knowing the severe difficulties besetting his home, making success for him the one bright spot to which his family could turn with confidence, he allowed his intellectual arrogance to lure him into slackness or negligence instead of making assiduous preparation for his Schools.

The home troubles were calamitous. For years an increasing restriction of means had been closing in on us, with perfectly blank prospects before the four younger brothers still at school. A.E.H. alone seemed to have an assured future. At the moment of his failure, in the month when he was taking his Finals, May 1881, a darker trouble still was looming. Our father had fallen seriously ill, so seriously that the doctor told our step-mother that my brother ought to be warned that recovery was unlikely. No one has ever suggested that the distress of this news contributed to the defective papers which A.E.H. handed to the Examiners, but it must have contributed to the remorse and despair which fell on him when he knew clearly what the result of his defective papers must be. No one belonging to his home needs any other explanation of

the change in his bearing that followed. The change was instantaneous and baffling. He returned home a stricken and petrified brother, who, from that time, was withdrawn from all of us behind a barrier of reserve which he set up as though to shield himself from either pity or blame. He met no word of reproach at home, but his own self-reproach was deep and lasting. During the year and a half passed at home in the embarrassed household he must have searched with horror for a means of rehabilitation. Without doubt he devoted every particle of his powers towards rehabilitation when the opportunity came, and for years no other interest possessed him as he subsisted in London on a meagre salary earned in the Civil Service.

Our father did not die at that time, but was never afterwards able to carry on his professional life in more than a desultory way. In the first period of his disaster A.E.H. was given work with the Sixth Form of Bromsgrove School, by Mr. Millington, the Headmaster, and there, incidentally, he had as one of his pupils his younger brother Basil, then head boy of the School. Until my brother gained the Civil Service appointment in December 1882 he shared in all the home privations and anxieties, at one time apparently insuperable, and I am convinced that at that time, if not before, he put away all thought or wish for a domestic life of his own. The obsession of his life became the determination to retrieve his academic disgrace, and long after that aim had been fulfilled the bitter taste of his failure remained with him. It is just as easy for us of his family to see the sequence of shame and achievement that sprang from his disaster, as it is difficult for outsiders, who cannot believe that financial troubles and an Oxford failure are enough to explain the evidence of injury which they spy when scrutinizing the output that A.E.H. has left behind him. It may be profitable to look from both points of view at typical verses written by him, verses in No. XXXIV of *More Poems*, which, on the surface, suggest

heartbroken love, but tell another tale to those who know that it was in the month of May that the poet's life was marred by his bitter Oxford experience.

May stuck the land with wickets:
For all the eye could tell,
The world went well.

Yet well, God knows, it went not,
God knows it went awry;
For me, one flowery Maytime,
It went so ill that I
Designed to die.

And if so long I carry
The lot that season marred,
'Tis that the sons of Adam
Are not so evil-starred
As they are hard.

To show the critical position of home affairs at the time of my brother's disaster, I may mention that the gloomy prospect before my other brothers was only changed through a legacy of £200 each falling to us in June 1882. This small sum did in fact open professional careers to the four brothers, contingent on the keeping of a home together for them while their training was in progress. A.E.H. devoted the whole of his £200 to this object, depositing it with the family solicitors to meet, so long as it lasted, the mortgage interest which in our case took the place of rent. His own slender salary in London was not supplemented in any way, nor were any of his troubles lightened until he was well on in his thirty-fourth year.

This is the matrix which set my brother's life into the form that it took. It needed no emotional disaster to make a deeper impression. My brother Laurence, in his memoir *A.E.H.*, has told some of this history in more detail, but perhaps not in a way to give assurance that all has been told without suppression. Our brother's daily life was open to us throughout his youth, impeccable in conduct and singularly free from any amorous entanglements.

There would be no need to state this but that silence can be misinterpreted as concealment. Probably the happiest lasting element in his life was his faithful attachment from boyhood onwards to three women friends at Woodchester, one of whom he has named as among the three greatest friends he ever had. She has been described in Laurence Housman's *A.E.H.* (pp. 24-5), and she died at the age of ninety in 1934. He never suffered any devastating blow through her.

It should not be concluded that all the bitterness in A.E.H.'s poetry springs from his academic catastrophe. Much of it comes from his early broodings; and, according to my reading of his troubles, these brought him a spiritual disaster as well—he failed to find happiness from ideals formed in youth that he had expected to bring happiness to him. I could not speak of these ideals if they had not been stated by himself in his Introductory Lecture at University College, London, which, in October 1892, inaugurated his re-entry into the scholastic world. In discussing the main objects of human life he states:

Our business here is not to live, but to live happily . . . our true occupation is to manufacture from the raw material of life the fabric of happiness.

Further on, he advocates aims that will bring happiness with them, quoting, first, words that Dante puts into the mouth of Ulysses: 'Ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge'. He continues:

For knowledge resembles virtue in this, and differs in this from other possessions, that it is not merely a means of procuring good, but is good in itself simply : it is not a coin which we pay down to purchase happiness, but it has happiness indissolubly bound up with it. Fortitude and continence and honesty are not commended to us on the ground that they conduce, as on the whole they do conduce, to material success, nor yet on the ground that they will be rewarded hereafter: those whose office it is to exhort mankind to virtue are ashamed to degrade the cause they plead by proffering such lures as these. And let us too disdain

to take lower ground in commending knowledge: let us insist that the pursuit of knowledge, like the pursuit of righteousness, is part of man's duty to himself. . . .

Later in life my brother criticized this Lecture as 'rhetorical and not wholly sincere'. My interpretation of his confession of partial insincerity is, that he knew in his heart that the pursuit of knowledge and virtue had not brought him happiness. I may be mistaken, but I will put in evidence one of the scraps of self-revelation found in his notebooks (*More Poems*, No. XXVIII)—

He, standing hushed, a pace or two apart,
Among the bluebells of the listless plain,
Thinks, and remembers how he cleansed his heart
And washed his hands in innocence in vain.

In Mr. Grant Richards's memoir it is good to find experiences that tell of silvery laughter, and ready friendliness, to temper the accepted belief that A. E. Housman was repellent to friendliness and only capable of humour that was grim and biting. Feasting, joking, and witty speech have share in the account which Mr. Richards gives of A.E.H. as he knew him, not unmixed with more formidable aspects which *were* grim and biting. My short account of the antecedent influences that made my brother what he was, may help to blend his history into an understandable whole. I do not profess that my brother was other than a self-centred character from boyhood to death, possessed by sensitiveness that brought him unnecessary pain, yet I believe readers of the chapters from his life told by Mr. Richards will discern how truly he carried into practice his philosophy of the duty of man, summed up as 'fortitude, continence, and honesty'.

KATHARINE E. SYMONS

December, 1940

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE first suggestion that I should write a book about Housman came to me in the early May of 1936 from Gerald Festus Kelly, the painter, at Bray, where, at the Hind's Head, we were the guests of Barry Neame at a dinner designed to show off the qualities of certain ancient clarets. Now, after the death of a friend, the mind has often a sad delusive trick of causing one, for a moment, to forget that he has gone, and, although the author of *A Shropshire Lad* was a Burgundy rather than, to use George Meredith's phrase, 'a claret man', it was not strange that I should find myself thinking, as I had so often thought before in like circumstances: 'Housman should be at this feast. . . .'

Neither was it strange that later in the evening Gerald Kelly, who cared for *A Shropshire Lad* and knew of its author's tastes, should speak to me of A. E. Housman. He would have it that I must the very next morning begin a book of my Housman memories. He promised me that if I would do so he would help me in every way in his power. For instance, he would give me a letter to Montague James, who would surely assist me in matters outside my own competence. Gerald Kelly is irresistible. I more or less consented. Next day, by coincidence, I found on my desk a letter from Frederick Heath, asking me to embark on the same enterprise. So to Gerald Kelly and Frederick Heath the responsibility and, perchance, the blame. But I am, and was, proud that they should have urged me.

Here is the result. It is not a biography; it is not a critical study. It is largely the story of my own business relation and my own friendship with Alfred Housman in the years that followed the first, almost abortive, publication of *A Shropshire Lad*, a friendship that lasted, in spite of many trials, until his death on April 30, 1936. Had I made better

use of the hours and days and weeks that I spent with him in those years I should to-day be a wiser man. Had I turned myself into his Boswell (as I often thought of doing) this would be a fuller book. As it is, I have to depend on my memory, on a dozen notes (where I might have made a thousand), and on the scores of letters that he wrote to me during thirty-eight years. A small part of the story I have already told in a volume of reminiscences.¹ Those who have read that book will forgive the repetition. When A.E.H. read it he questioned the accuracy of one or two of my statements. His corrections, even if justified, were not of high importance, and I persist in thinking my own memory the more exact.

In effect, then, what I have to tell of Alfred Housman is based on my own records, but I have also allowed myself to gather material from his friends and mine, and to set down some stories, reminiscences and opinions which are either new or which might otherwise be lost in the fading papers and magazines in which they appeared.

I should perhaps express regret that so much that I tell is related in one way or another to the minor pleasures of this life. It was inevitable. Perhaps A.E.H. and I came together in the first place because he had respect for my father, Franklin Richards, and my uncle, Herbert Richards—Herbert Richards had been one of the examiners when Housman failed in Greats—but I am myself no sort of scholar and no sort of philosopher. We shared, therefore, and generally talked of, his less austere interests.

I have to render thanks to several kind and willing helpers. In the first place to Mrs. E. W. Symons, Alfred Housman's younger sister, without whose active interest this would have been a slimmer and far less interesting

¹ 'Author Hunting: Memories of Years Spent Mainly in Publishing, 1897-1925.' (London: 1934.)

book, and would have lacked the introduction which has added so much to its value. Only Mrs. Symons and I know how much she has aided me. To Professor G. B. A. Fletcher, who with an unselfishness and generosity which I can never repay placed at my disposal the manuscript of the notes which appear among the appendices and who was kind enough to read my proofs; to Dr. Percy Withers, for permission to use the article he contributed to the *New Statesman*; to Mr. W. R. M. Lamb; to Mr. Houston Martin of Philadelphia for permission to quote from his article in the *Yale Review*; to Mrs. Gwynne Evans for drawing on her memory; to Sir William Rothenstein; to Sir Sydney Cockerell, whose work I have used as an appendix; to Mr. John C. Nicholson, for allowing photographs to be taken of Byron Cottage, and to Mr. Maurice Beck for taking those photographs; to Mr. Bert Thomas; to Mr. Hugh Kingsmill, to Mr. E. V. Knox and to the late Humbert Wolfe for allowing me to print their parodies, and to Messrs. Jarrold, Messrs. Benn, and the Proprietors of *Punch*, respectively, for confirming these permissions, as well as to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* for a parody by Mr. Allan M. Laing; to Monsieur Maurice Pollet; to Mr. Udney Yule; to Mr. Frederick Page for the helpful care he has taken in reading the proofs; to Messrs. Kegan Paul, for the trouble they took in looking up old records; to Mr. Mitchell Kennerley; to Mr. Witter Bynner; to Mr. Edmund Wilson; to Messrs. Scribner; to Mr. Stanley Bayliss for his article on Housman and the English Composer, and to the editor of *The Listener* for allowing its inclusion here; to Messrs. Sheed and Ward; to the Union Society of University College and to Mrs. Ayrton Gould, for allowing me to use the parody by her husband, Gerald Gould; to Professor F. W. Oliver; to Professor O. L. Richmond; to Professor R. W. Chambers;

to Messrs. George Bell and Sons; to Messrs. Chatto and Windus for permission to include quotations from R. L. Stevenson; to the family of Sir Joseph Thomson, O.M., and particularly to his daughter for letting me see and then allowing me to print her reminiscences; to Mr. E. H. W. Meyerstein; to the editor of *Notes and Queries*; to Mr. Jonathan Cape; and to many others, too numerous to mention individually, who have helped me in various ways. Finally, I have to thank the Trustees of Alfred Housman's will for their generous permission to use the letters which Alfred Housman wrote to me and for their general consideration.

I have in my time sent hundreds and hundreds of books to press and I should therefore much like to add here my tribute to the extreme care and the unusual intelligence shown by the 'readers' of the Oxford University Press. My book has, of course, been child's play compared to the sort of thing which often engages their energies, but still I have been surprised by their knowledge and by the almost meticulous care which they have brought to bear on small questions which have arisen.

GRANT RICHARDS

I

A SHROPSHIRE LAD APPEARS

Alfred Edward Housman, the eldest son of Edward Housman, a Bromsgrove solicitor, was born in 1859 at the Valley House, Fockbury, Worcestershire. Educated at Bromsgrove School and St. John's College, Oxford, he entered the Patent Office in 1882. Ten years later he became Professor of Latin at University College, London. 'A Shropshire Lad' was published in 1896. In 1911 he left the University of London to become Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge. In 1922 'Last Poems' was published. He died in 1936. In the same year 'More Poems' appeared, and in 1937 'A.E.H. Some Poems, Some Letters and a Personal Memoir' by his brother, Laurence Housman.

ON May 1, 1890, I, then seventeen and living in a narrow room at the Hampden Residential Club in the sordid Euston neighbourhood, obtained through the influence of Grant Allen, my uncle-by-marriage, an unimportant post under W. T. Stead on the staff of the *Review of Reviews*. November arrived and with it a flood of Christmas books to review. Stead's idea was that we should supply his readers with some kind of guide to this flood. The task was thrown to me, and I continued in the same kind of work until I left Stead at the end of 1896. During those six years there passed through my hands to deal with in one way or another all books of general interest that came from the publishers. My earlier training and associations had made me love books, the atmosphere of books, the names and reputations of authors. For most of the hours of the day I thought of nothing but books, their writers, and their publishers, and I suppose I had as much knowledge of the outward appearance of what was being published as any one not commercially connected with the trade.

It came to pass therefore, quite naturally, that I knew

more and more authors, and so when John Lane, the publisher, introduced me to his partner, Elkin Mathews, and to Richard Le Gallienne, Arthur Symons, Norman Gale and other writers who were preparing to enlist themselves under the sign of The Bodley Head, I began to move in literary circles, to frequent literary tea-parties, and, with modest reservations, to fancy myself as a young man embarked on a literary life. In course of time I came to know, among others, Laurence Housman, to admire his poems and his edition of *Jump-to-Glory Jane*, and to believe that he, with William Watson, John Davidson, Lionel Johnson, Henry Harland, George Street, H. G. Wells, Violet Hunt, Evelyn Sharp and half a dozen other men and women of their generation, represented what was best in the literature of their time. And naturally my interest in the Housman name increased when there came to me in 1895 *The Were-Wolf*,¹ the work of an elder sister, Clemence, who had the ability to engrave beautifully on wood. Brother and sister were the objects of my great respect.

There was another reason why I should be familiar with the name of Housman. In 1881 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge published a book, *The Story of Our Museum: showing How We Formed It, and What It Taught Us*, by the Rev. Henry Housman, A.K.C., late Fellow of the Geological Society and Member of the Chichester and West Sussex Natural History and Microscopical Society. The book came for review to Grant Allen, who made me a present of it when I was a boy of eight, and I gained much from reading it. Even I determined to found such a museum for myself. The idea came to nothing, although, hoping that if I achieved children they might be more

¹ It appeared originally in *Atalanta*, a magazine for girls. The illustrations of the book, engraved in wood by the author, were the work of Laurence Housman.

intelligent, I never parted with the book. That Henry Housman was first cousin to Edward Housman, the father of Alfred, Clemence and Laurence; and in 1873 one of his sisters became the stepmother of Edward Housman's family of seven children.¹ The main scene of Henry Housman's book is Woodchester, near Stroud, in the Cotswolds, a place of great loveliness where he lived as a boy with his family. He gives an attractive description of the place with its archaeological interests and natural beauties. Alfred's younger sister, Mrs. Symons,² tells me that every inch of Woodchester was well known to Alfred from boyhood³ onwards, and it must have been from Selsley Hill that he first saw an impressive view of the Severn. It is not impressive in Worcestershire. The Woodchester Housmans' first cousin, Edward, had first married the youngest daughter of the learned Rector of Woodchester, Dr. John Williams;⁴ and, though no Housman or Williams was

¹ See folding chart at end of book.

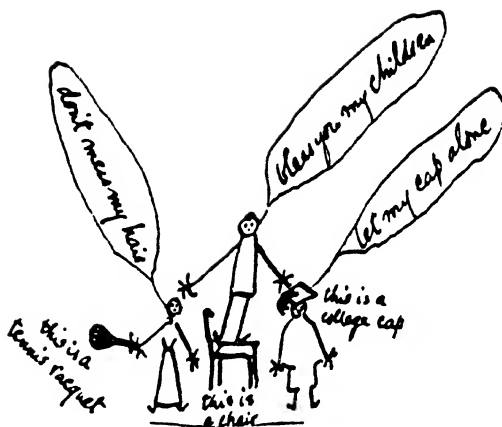
² Mrs. (Katharine Elizabeth) Symons is Alfred's younger sister. Her husband was E. W. Symons, the Headmaster of King Edward's School, Bath, from 1896 to 1920. She is the author of a 'Research Narrative': *The Grammar School of King Edward VI, Bath, and its Ancient Foundation* (1935) and, among other writings, an address to the Bath Branch of the Historical Association, *Unexplored Sources of Bath History* (1921).

³ I have seen one relic of those boyhood days—a prize given to Alfred: a calf-bound copy of Dr. William Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*—the 1875 edition. The inscription says: 'Grammar School of King Edward VI, Bromsgrove. Midsummer MDCCCLXXVI Examination Prize. Form VI. Prize for Classical Scholarship. A. E. Housman. Herbert Millington M.A., Headmaster'. Search through its one thousand two hundred and ninety three octavo pages of small type shows no sign that the book was ever used, except that under 'Fascinum'

Nescio quis teneros oculos mihi fascinat agnum

has the two syllables underlined as shown and has "!!" against it. Millington, by the way, on seeing *A Shropshire Lad*, thought it 'not good'.

⁴ In her contribution to *Alfred Edward Housman*, a supplement to the *Bromsgrovian* (Bromsgrove School, 1936), Mrs. Symons says: 'Mentally, his [Alfred's] great abilities were probably derived from his mother. Her father, John Williams, D.D. was an accomplished scholar—a successful



A.S.H. invt et del.

Entd at Sta. Hall.

Sketch from a letter written by Alfred Housman to his sister Katharine (Mrs. E. W. Symons) on the announcement of her engagement in 1887.

living at Woodchester after the Rector died, Alfred Housman was a constant visitor to his mother's friends there to the end of their lives. He stayed chiefly at Woodchester House, which had been the home of the elder Housmans when they lived at Woodchester.

I was of course far from being alone in respecting the work of Laurence and Clemence Housman, but the literary world seemed just then a rather crowded nursery of talent, some of which might prove to be genius, and it is possible therefore that the name of Housman commanded less respect from the critics, the touts and the prophets than their work justified. But however this may have been, it is certainly true that a small book, *A Shropshire Lad* with the name A. E. Housman on its title-page, came in 1896 from the house of Kegan Paul¹ without attracting much attention. It would perhaps have done better if it had come from The Bodley Head. Kegan Paul had, even after allowing for the books of Austin Dobson and Wilfrid Blunt, too many mere versifiers on his list. He had, strongly engrained, the habit of publishing verse for which the authors would pay.² There was, in consequence, no reason why a literary editor should pick *A Shropshire Lad* from a pile of books of verse in the hope of discovering genius—unless he were alive to the significance of the name of its author. Moreover *A Shropshire Lad* was a small and unpretentious, if comely, volume.

tutor as well as a parish priest. He was a leader in bringing hymn-singing into Church of England services, himself composing and printing hymns, and metrical versions of the psalms, for use in his church. His lore in classical languages enabled him to translate the works of early bishops from Greek verse into English; and apparently his faculty for versification passed on to his daughter and to more than one of his grandsons.'

¹ At that time the Kegan Paul offices were at Paternoster House, Charing Cross Road, a fine building which the firm built for itself, just above the Garrick Theatre and opposite Bear Street which runs into Cranbourn Street. That was the birthplace of *A Shropshire Lad* as a book.

² It is not at all the habit of the firm to-day.

The first review to appear as far as I can ascertain was in *The Times* of March 27, 1896, under the heading 'Books of the Week: Shorter Notices.' I can quote it in full:

'A newer writer of verse, Mr. A. E. Housman, strikes a decidedly original note. The mere mention here and there of Ludlow, Wenlock, and Shrewsbury, of Wrekin and Severn, gives a pleasant element of local colour; but this would be nothing if the essentials of thought and music were absent. Happily they are there in no niggard measure. Mr. Housman has a true sense of the sweetness of country life and of its tragedies too, and his gift of melodious expression is genuine.'

A meagre notice, it is true, but *The Times*, as we shall see, has made up for it since. A paper has traditions in its treatment of poetry. It was in its own pages that on March 11, 1937, it printed a sentence from a note of Owen Meredith's to Robert Browning: 'I asked him [one Lucas, a literary critic of *The Times*] why he didn't write what he had said to me [in praise of Robert Browning's poetry] in *The Times*. But he answered that Delane wouldn't hear of poetry'.

The *Athenaeum*¹ ignored the book. The *Academy*, how-

¹ The *Athenaeum* was at that time the recognized organ of the literary world. It was A.E.H. himself who told me that it had entirely neglected his book. If he was right, the fact must have delayed general recognition, but there seems to have been an excuse. Apparently it was not sent to the paper for review, or, if sent, did not reach the editorial table, for its name did not even appear in their 'List of New Books' (equivalent to 'Books Received'). Anyhow, the *Athenaeum* made amends when the second edition appeared (see p. 27); and when *Last Poems* was published it had passed away. It would have been even more surprising if the *Academy* had ignored it. James Sutherland Cotton, its editor, was himself a scholar; the name of Housman would have been doubly familiar to him, and he was always ready to recognize the claims of the younger writers. Its unsigned review appeared on July 11, 1896: '... A book that has a claim on all who are the sincere servants of poetry. In these poems there is a voice with a beautiful sound. It calls, and we are obliged to listen; it continues to speak, and we fear the moment when it will be silent. . . . Life, love, and death make for him a trinity to be sung sweetly, purely, and reverently . . . he lets fall for our keeping exquisite fragments of unsullied song. . . . It may be asked whether Mr. Housman is largely in the debt of any past or present king of rhyme. To such a question a sturdy negative must be returned. We suspect

ever, did it some justice; while Richard Le Gallienne, then a critic with a popular following, with no great scholarly equipment but with a passion for letters which made up for this lack, became its foremost advocate in all quarters open to him. How often he wrote about it I do not know, but he did both write and speak with enthusiasm. His article in T. P. O'Connor's *Star*¹ sent me eagerly to the poems themselves, and in the *Review of Reviews* I allowed myself as soon as possible thereafter to write of A. E. Housman as 'a very real poet, and a very English one at that'. And I that Mr. Housman has read *Underwoods* and *A Child's Garden of Verses* with especial attention, though this perusal has not caused a Stevensonian sediment of more than a fractional thickness to lie at the bottom of his song. . . .

"Breath's a ware that will not keep."

He is a wise father that knows his own children; but Shakespeare might claim the paternity of this line with never a show of hesitation.' A review of unqualified, enthusiastic praise.

¹ It is easy to be wise after the event. It required courage in those days to welcome a new arrival with high, unlimited, praise. Le Gallienne went far in the *Star* of May 11, 1896: '... the charm of such simple lyric or ballad verse as we find here . . . is as hard to convey in prose as it would be hard to convey the various charms of water to one who happened never to have seen it. . . . *A Shropshire Lad*, therefore, to be properly appreciated, must be regarded as a whole, as a piece of country autobiography . . . a character is self-revealed and a story is told, with here and there glimpses of a comrade and his story . . . all having a certain personal bearing, all contributing to paint the picture of the "Shropshire Lad's" world and its ways. . . . It would be difficult to over-praise the exquisite simplicity of the third verse of "Loveliest of trees". . . . Felicities of natural description are scattered like cowslips up and down Mr. Housman's verses. . . . It is evident that a "Shropshire Lad" has been hit very hard by a woman. . . . A sadder book has seldom been written. . . . "The New Mistress", which obviously owes its inspiration to Mr. Kipling, though it is none the worse for that . . . curiously fascinating little book.' I quote Le Gallienne at some length because, some thirty-nine years later, Housman spoke to me with appreciation of Le Gallienne's work in general, saying that at its best it had never been sufficiently valued. In the *Observer* of December 13, 1936, a correspondent recalls 'a characteristic quip' of Housman's: 'I do not see', he said when Le Gallienne's *The Religion of a Literary Man* appeared, 'wherein it differs from the irreligion of a non-literary man.' E. V. Lucas told the same story. By the way, Laurence Housman tells us that Le Gallienne's master in those days, George Meredith, 'did not show much liking' for *A Shropshire Lad*: "an orgy of naturalism" was his description of it'.

published Housman's portrait. That portrait I obtained from the author. I was most struck by the poem 'Is my team ploughing?' In *A Shropshire Lad* it is still my favourite, as it was of Thomas Hardy and of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.¹ Later on—in 1898—William Archer devoted an article to Housman in the *Fortnightly*, an article which became in 1902 a chapter in his *Poets of the Younger Generation*.² But it does not seem much of a chapter when, after thirty-seven years, one comes to consider the measure of his praise. Here is his conclusion: 'There is no reason why Mr. Housman should not put off his rustic mask and widen the range of his subject-matter. I trust he will do so in other and larger volumes. But even should he be content to remain merely *A Shropshire Lad*, his place among English poets is secure.' I do not know of any record of Archer's reaction to Housman's second, but not larger, volume. Housman, in that, certainly widened the range of his subject-matter.

And in the same week as the *Academy* review W. E. Henley permits E. Nesbit³ (Mrs. Hubert Bland), the 'E. Nesbit' of the children's stories, to give a page and three-quarters to a review in the *National Observer*:

'... He who shall find a treasure may not keep it hidden ... the work of a poet ... Mr. Housman produces his best effects by the simplest means—ever a note of genius ... one is struck by the rare felicity of phrasing—the inevitableness of all the finer lines, the habitual fidelity to the short words, English words, which enables the poet now and then to embrace a word from the Latin with such ardour and effect. ... This is not poetry that will take the world by storm as did Mr. Swinburne's earlier work. It will not be endowed by statesmen,

¹ 'I think it may be my best, though it is not the most perfect', Housman wrote to Houston Martin in 1933.

² The book contains a portrait by Robert Bryden.

³ Writing to his brother nearly eleven years later on April 30, 1907, A.E.H. says, 'I suppose she [Mrs. Bland] already knows that I am morose and unamiable.'

nor will societies be formed for the discussion of its meaning. There will probably be no sudden or enthusiastic recognition of it. But it should make its way—surely if slowly. “The Shropshire Lad” has so much of achievement that one hardly dares to say that it has promise—but if this be promise, then it is the promise of great things, things which will be remembered when our little artists in wired flowers are forgiven and forgotten. We only trust that our literary sons will not be reproaching us thirty years hence for having failed to honour a poet when he first came upon us—for having left it to them to discover what good things were done in our day.’

Some forty-one years after that review appeared, a line in a letter written by Housman to an American, Mr. Houston Martin, on March 22, 1936, which was printed, with others, in the *Yale Review* (Winter, 1937), set me on the track of the review by Hubert Bland himself which Housman had told me had given him greater pleasure than any other. He had, however, kept no copy of it and had but a vague idea of the place in which it appeared: ‘The best review I ever saw of my poems was by Hubert Bland the Socialist in a weekly paper *The New Age* (1896),’ he wrote to Mr. Martin. Bland, indeed, was more quickly on the field than was his wife. The (unsigned) review in the *New Age* appeared on April 16, 1896.¹

‘Here at last is a note that has for long been lacking in English poetry—simplicity, to wit. This our time is rife with poets and poetasters, and the most carping critic is compelled to confess that very much of their work is on a very fair level of excellence. But there is so much of it, and it is all so much alike, that, although one may have one’s preferences, one has the greatest possible difficulty in giving comprehensible reasons for them. A shelf of modern poets resembles a case of trinkets in the window of a jeweller’s shop. Examine each brooch or locket carefully in your own hand and doubtless you will find

¹ A.E.H. wrote to Laurence Housman on April 27, ’96: ‘I thought the *New Age* review very nice, except the first paragraph disparaging the other chaps’ (see *A.E.H.*, p. 163).

that one differs from another in small details, but the total effect is one of dead and even dismal sameness.

'In short, the work of the minor poet of the day is a pretty and pleasing thing, but "pretty" and "pleasing" are the strongest adjectives that a sane critic should permit himself to use of it. The workmanship is deft and skilful, the thought marked mainly by a sort of dainty commonplaceness, the metre generally correct, and even musical in a young-lady pianoforte-playing kind of way.

'But the curse of unconscious imitation is over it all. It is all "derivative", to use the critical slang of the moment. A.B. suggests Rossetti, C.D. recalls Browning, E.F. has evidently soaked himself in Keats, G.H. soars after Shelley (on a broken pinion), I.J. draws his inspiration from Verlaine; and so on through the list.

'One catches echoes everywhere, and the echoes of Tennyson are thunderous. Thus about once a week we may count upon the appearance of a new poet, but not once a lustre upon new poetry.

'The little volume before us contains, on well-nigh every page, essentially and distinctively new poetry. The individual voice rings out true and clear. It is not an inspiring voice, perhaps; it speaks not to us of hope in the future, of glory in the past, or of joy in the present. But it says and sings things that have not been sung or said before, and this with a power and directness, and with a heart-penetrating quality for which one may seek in vain through the work of any contemporary lyricist, Mr. Henley perhaps excepted. . . .

'This direct expression of elemental emotions, of heart-thoughts, if we may be permitted the phrase, is the dominant note of all Mr. Housman's work, as it was of Heine's alone among modern singers.

'So direct, so inevitable, is it that we doubt not some few readers accustomed to the tricky involutions and verbal contortions of contemporary verse will be inclined to think it bald, and to imagine that they discern in it an absence of art. In point of fact, of course, it is not art, but artifice, that is missing. Mr. Housman's artistic range is limited—it lies within narrow limits, even—but within those limits it is little short of consummate. . . .

'As we have said, Mr. Housman's poetry is wanting in the note of gladness; that is to say, it is not the highest poetry. But it comes astonishingly near the highest.'

And here I must quote from the *Bookman*¹ of August 1896, where a brief article on Housman appeared in the section 'New Writers'. I do so, not because of the sentence or two of praise with which it begins, but because the information that follows is almost certainly supplied or inspired, directly or indirectly, by Housman himself and is, I think, occasionally in his own words—for he was sometimes strangely willing to answer definite questions, as Monsieur Pollet and Dr. Withers were to discover. Here (omitting the first sentences) is the passage:

'Their author, Mr. Alfred Edward Housman, is Professor of Latin in University College, London, and till the publication of *A Shropshire Lad* was known merely as a man of learning. Born in 1859, educated at Bromsgrove School and St. John's College, Oxford, where he gained a scholarship in 1877, he was placed in the first class in the Honour School of Classical Moderations, but one's respect for University tests falls before the knowledge that the scholar, who was already learned, was "ploughed" in "Greats". After teaching for a little in his old school, he became a clerk in the Patent Office, where he remained for nearly ten years. Four years ago he was elected to his present post. Mr. Housman's writings have mainly appeared in the learned journals, his first article being printed when he was still an undergraduate, in the *Journal of Philology*, to which he has contributed papers on "Horatiana", "Emenda-

¹ The *Bookman* was already—in June, 1896—well ahead with its praise of the book: nearly a column, signed 'A.M.', initials signifying Miss Annie Macdonell, who was, I believe, Dr. Robertson Nicoll's assistant in the editorship:

'Here is a writer who stands outside all the poetical vogues of to-day. . . . But he is a poet. I have seen no book of verses for years that breathes at least more spontaneity, and very few with as much individuality. Mr. Housman's technical merits might easily be surpassed, but his rhythms and forms call for no criticism. . . . Original as Mr. Housman undoubtedly is, now and then you hear familiar voices in his verse. If he had been more given to making moral reflections than pictures he might have been named a kinsman of Clough. . . . Bliss Carman at his best. But I will dare a loftier comparison, and say that there are lyrics here that might have come out of Heine's Song Book. The exquisiteness of Heine and his poisonous sting are both absent. . . .'

tiones Propertianæ", "On a Vatican Glossary", "The Agamemnon of Æschylus", and "The Manuscripts of Propertius". The *Classical Review* also contains various papers of his, on "Adversaria Orthographica", "Emendations in the Medea of Euripides", etc.; nor does this list exhaust his contributions to Greek and Latin scholarship. Besides his work in the learned journals he has edited Ovid's "Ibis" in the new *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum*. These writings belong to the scientific rather than to the literary side of classical criticism; but in Mr. Pollard's *Choral Odes from the Greek Dramatists*, three translations from Mr. Housman's pen were considered to be of special excellence. . . . The Rev. Robert Housman, of whom there is an account in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, was his great-grandfather. Mr. Housman does not promise us any more poems. . . .

Yes, I am convinced that many of these sentences come from Housman's own pen, or from his lips. And I am confirmed in this belief by the fact that almost the same words appeared, with variations that bear out my conviction, in two editorial paragraphs in the *Echo* at about the same time. The *Echo* was a halfpenny evening paper, and it says much for the halfpenny press of that day that this notice was followed by a review, August 13, 1896, of nearly a column, signed 'N.O.B':

. . . Here comes one more child of the Muses . . . bringing with him as his offering to Apollo a slender volume of poems. . . . Deaf to the cynical raillery of Mr. H. D. Traill as to the ponderous severity of Mr. Gladstone, the Professor of Latin at University College, London, courageously comes forward to sing his frugal song. Yes, the reader must forearm himself against disappointment. He must not conceive a new John Davidson, a second William Watson, a kindred soul with Arthur Symonds, or a companion to Francis Thompson. Rather must he expect a writer of graceful verse on a plane midway between Mr. Norman Gale and Mr. Arthur Benson . . . sometimes worthy of Hood. . . .

Tepid praise, making one wonder to-day why the herald's trumpets and why the use of so much space.

Still, when all contemporary recognition is taken into account—and it should include high praise in the *Daily News*, May 11, 1896, and the *Guardian*, June 3, 1896—it is strangely true that *A Shropshire Lad* was slow in making its way. Take first its adventures in manuscript. It went, to begin with, to Macmillan, who refused it without, apparently, much hesitation. 'It was offered to Macmillan', Housman wrote in the most important of his letters, that to Monsieur Maurice Pollet, 'and declined by them on the advice, I have been told, of John Morley, who was their reader.'¹ Later Housman said to me that Charles Whibley was the friend who told him this, and that Macmillan gave as their reason the fact that they did not find an easy sale for poetry. Messrs. Macmillan, whom I asked for enlightenment, were able, on September 4, 1936, to confirm that the book had been offered to them: 'Our records show that *A Shropshire Lad* was certainly offered to us and rejected, but there is nothing to tell us who reported on the MS. or the reasons for which it was refused.' If John Morley was actually the blind reader there are few facts as strange in literary history. 'Then', Housman continued to Maurice Pollet, 'a friend introduced me to Kegan Paul; but the book was published at my own expense.'² That friend, we learn from his own account, was A. W. Pollard,³ who had gone up to Oxford at the same time as Housman:

'*A Shropshire Lad*, under the name of *Terence*, was ready for publication. Housman knew that books of mine had been published by Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., who had gained rather a special reputation for bringing out prettily

¹ Dr. Withers in *A Buried Life* says that Housman told him that the book was refused by other publishers, including Lawrence and Bullen.

² Housman told me that a similar suggestion accompanied the manuscript when it went to Macmillan.

³ See *Alfred Edward Housman*, a supplement to the *Bromsgrovian* (Bromsgrove School, 1936). Henry Holt's New York Edition has additional material.

printed volumes of verse, and asked me to arrange with them for its publication at his expense. Of course there was no difficulty as to this (I think Housman put down £30 and got it back with a small profit), but my being entrusted with the manuscript led me to suggest that *Terence* was not an attractive title, and that in the phrase "A Shropshire Lad", which he had used in the poem, he had much a better one. He agreed at once, and I think the change helped.

There can be no doubt that it did help.

The Kegan Paul episode was also strange, for no less a critic than Arthur Waugh—father of Alec who wrote *The Loom of Youth* and of Evelyn who wrote *Vile Bodies*—was Kegan Paul's adviser. How is it that he, a younger man than John Morley and so more open to the appeal of the new generation, did not at once appreciate the quality of the manuscript? Very likely he did. And it is not unlikely that he at least attempted to induce the elders of his firm to do their best to brush aside both its author's offer to pay the bill and the firm's traditions and to suggest terms to him which would secure them all reasonable rights in the first work of a poet whose achievement so far outshone mere promise. In his book of reminiscences, *One Man's Road*, Waugh does nothing to explain the mystery, unless his saying that the fact that he was the publisher of Austin Dobson was 'the greatest privilege' he experienced at Kegan Paul's is itself an explanation—that and the fact that he was 'a frank Tennysonian idolater'. In addition he does slightly vary the information given to us by A. W. Pollard: 'the original manuscript', Waugh says, 'bore the legend "By Terence Hearsay" which explains the fact that the final poem¹ begins "Terence, this is stupid stuff"—a reference not easily intelligible when the pseudonym has vanished from the title-page'. I should add here that A. W. Pollard has a footnote to his *Bromsgrovian* paper on A.E.H.: "Terence"

¹ A slight error. Waugh should have said this of the penultimate poem.

is all that I remember of the title, but I am told that in its fullest form it was "The Poems of Terence Hearsay". Laurence Housman's account almost agrees with A. W. Pollard's, dropping only the 'The' from the title.

Well, *A Shropshire Lad* came to be published—in an edition of five hundred copies, the type being then distributed. William Rothenstein in his reminiscences¹ says:

'In 1896 A. E. Housman's 'Shropshire Lad' was published. It had an immediate success—perhaps success is not the right word, for rarely has a work of genius been at once accepted at its true value. But people who had sneered at minor poetry were silenced. Here was fine poetry, and a poet taking his place quickly as an immortal, as a great fiddler goes to his seat in the orchestra. There was no legend about Housman. No one seemed to know anything about him, save that he was Laurence Housman's brother.'

I have quoted Rothenstein in full because this paragraph of his, although written years after the event, was the work of one who, not much later than the year of which he writes, became a friend of Alfred Housman, and because his evidence is valuable as that of a friendly observer who lived through the period. But I am convinced that his memory has played him false. Alfred Housman did not take his place 'quickly as an immortal' save perhaps in a section of Rothenstein's own circle of intellectuals. The painter who cares for literature cares for it passionately, and the painter in this case in his fervour confused what should have been with what was! People who sneered at minor poetry were not at once silenced.² Proofs of this contention of mine are at my hand and I do not need to fall back on what Housman

¹ *Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein*, vol. i (London: 1931). In his second volume, published later, Rothenstein writes again of *A Shropshire Lad*: 'It became, almost at once, an English classic.'

² I have tried hard to find Gosse's review of 'three whole columns' of which Laurence Housman writes in *A.E.H.* (p. 81). It was, we are told, 'very appreciative'.

himself told me. I have just said that the first edition of the book was five hundred copies only, and A. W. Pollard has written that he thought its author 'put down £30 and got it back with a small profit'. Yes, he may have got his money back with a small profit, but not quickly, and it must have been a very small profit. The price at which the book was sold to the public was half a crown, and one takes little time in working out the sum. 500 copies = 24 copies for review; 30 copies for the privileged libraries and for the author and his friends; 1 copy for file purposes; 283 accounted for at one and ninepence each; 162 reckoned as 150 (to John Lane for publication in America as I afterwards discovered) at 1s. each = a return of £32. 5s. 3d. Yes, a profit of £2. 5s. 3d.! Small indeed. And hardly enough to pay the interest on the investment, for the month and year of that first publication was February 1896, and it was not until September 1898 that a second edition appeared. I have proved that *A Shropshire Lad* did not have an 'immediate success'!¹ I am proud to say that that second edition, when it did come, bore my name on its title-page. That fact is one of the reasons of this book, for thereafter my relations with *A Shropshire Lad* for many years could not have been more intimate.

¹ I owe these figures to the courtesy of Messrs. Kegan Paul. They also told me that the sale to the end of December 1896 (including the number sold to Lane) amounted to 445; that in the following half year 16 copies were sold and, in its successor, 36. 'This', they say, 'accounts for the whole edition.' Note however that these figures cover only a period of a year and, say, three-quarters, while Laurence Housman says in *A.E.H.* (p. 81) that 'two years after' the end of 1896 six copies remained unsold. Clearly there is a discrepancy here. It was within that period that my first edition appeared. It is likely that Laurence Housman wrote roughly when he put down 'two years after', and it is also likely that his final six copies were what are known in the trade as 'overs'—for the paper for a book never gives exactly the number ordered. There are always a few copies in excess, and unless an undertaking to sell only a certain number has been given these 'overs' can properly be disposed of in the ordinary manner.

II

THE SECOND EDITION

A SHROPSHIRE LAD having been published and having won some fame, its admirers became curious about the personality of the man who had written it. That he had two relations in the world which produced books, and that he himself occupied the Latin Chair in London, was known; but that was all that was generally known. Not every one read Dr. Robertson Nicoll's *Bookman*. For accounts of his childhood and his youth, and of his character, tastes and achievements as a schoolboy at Bromsgrove and as a scholar at Oxford and at London University, one must now go to the papers in *Alfred Edward Housman*, a Memorial Supplement to *The Bromsgrovian*,¹ by his sister Katharine Elizabeth Symons, by A. W. Pollard, by Laurence Housman and by Professor R. W. Chambers—not the American R. W. Chambers, but the Quain Professor of English Language and Literature; to *A. E. Housman: a Sketch*, by A. S. F. Gow, a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, in Housman's time and now; to Laurence Housman's *The Unexpected Years*, to his brief introduction to *More Poems*, and, particularly, to his *A.E.H.: Some Poems, Some Letters and a Personal Memoir*; and to Professor R. W. Chambers's *Man's Unconquerable Mind*.

¹ There are two editions (obtainable at the School Bookshop, Bromsgrove School, Worcestershire): the ordinary edition and one that is limited. There is also an edition with additional matter, published by Holt in New York. 'All profits from the sale' of these editions are being allocated to the establishment of a Housman Scholarship Fund at Bromsgrove School. 'Its income will be used to enable promising boys to go from the School to the Universities of Oxford or of Cambridge, or to prolong their studies at one of these Universities.' Particulars can be obtained from the Headmaster. In *The Times*, June 11, 1937, Laurence Housman, announcing this fund, makes it clear that subscriptions can also be sent to the Headmaster.

Mrs. Symons has supplemented her first paper with two in *The Edwardian*, the magazine of King Edward's School, Bath, for September and December, 1936, *Memories of A. E. Housman* and *More Memories of A.E.H.*¹ As I proceed other pamphlets and articles will be mentioned.

Mrs. Symons's papers are much addressed to the fact that her brother was thought to be 'an enigma'. She writes from knowledge and from a different point of view. In one way and another this word has been used too often and too strongly; she herself disapproves of its general use. A.E.H. was certainly reserved, and at some times he was more reserved than at others, but in all my connexion with him I never felt that he was much more reserved than were most of my scholarly friends who were many years older than I was. True, he resented undue curiosity; true, he did not go out of his way to discuss the characters and tastes of his other friends—indeed unless you to whom he was talking knew those other friends, he would be unlikely to mention them; true, he was not garrulous like Robinson Ellis. But to be reserved is not necessarily to be an enigma. He had well-defined tastes; he gave time and thought to several pleasures which are the common pleasures of thousands of men, and he was often willing to talk of those pleasures. I have known many dons who were reserved and reticent in almost the same way that Housman was. Bachelor dons of his own period and of the earlier generation have, and had, that habit. My father, Franklin Richards, of Trinity College, Oxford, whom matrimony did not greatly alter, was almost as reticent and just as much of an enigma, if that word must be used; and so was his brother Herbert, of Wadham. Generally the very learned

¹ Both have been reprinted as pamphlets, one of which, the first, was certainly for sale, presumably through J. Grant Melliish, the printer, of 27 Broad Street, Bath.

do not wear their heart on their sleeve. The many differences to be seen in human nature inevitably create riddles of one kind and another. A. E. Housman, I maintain, provided in his own person no exceptional riddle.

I come now to the beginning of my own acquaintance with Alfred Housman. It is one of the unimportant matters about which his memory and mine differed. In my *Author Hunting* I had described our first meeting as having taken place when he came unexpectedly to see me at 9 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, a year or so after, on January 1, 1897, I became a publisher. If any reader cares sufficiently he can turn to the *Shropshire Lad* chapter of that book.

Briefly, in my previous account, spun out of my memory, I said that I had written to A.E.H. in early 1897, a few weeks or months after I became a publisher, and begged him to let me publish a second edition of *A Shropshire Lad* at my own risk, and had received an answer in which Housman neither accepted my proposal nor rejected it, but, remarking that the first edition was not yet exhausted, gave me some hope that he would write to me again. So I believed, and believe. Well, I went on to say that about a year later Housman's card was brought to me in my office and that, meeting then for the first time, we discussed my proposal, that he agreed to it, and that 'so the matter was arranged, quickly, informally, pleasantly . . . and A. E. Housman went his way'. I could have sworn to the virtual accuracy of that account.

But Housman read my chapter and on September 22, 1934, wrote to me: 'I have told you already¹ that your account of our first acquaintance is wrong: I called in Henrietta Street by appointment, and you took me out somewhere in a cab to lunch; and I first met you at

¹ In conversation.

Laurence's in Marloes Road.' Commenting on this to-day, I cannot but say in defence that I have a very good memory for my meetings with the great, that I should have remembered the Marloes Road encounter if it had ever taken place and that, even if it had occurred, I should never have dared on the strength of it to have invited the poet to a meal. And it happens that I was never a visitor to the Marloes Road home of Clemence and Laurence Housman.

We may, however, both of us be wrong, for there is new evidence that, while it does not contradict my printed account of what occurred in Henrietta Street, yet offers no support to Housman's contention.

In the first place a letter written by me to Housman on February 22, 1898, from Henrietta Street,¹ written, I still believe, at some time after the interview I have described.

A. E. Housman, Esq.

Dear Sir,

I confess that you rather clash with my ideas for *A Shropshire Lad* when you say that you would not like the second edition to be sold at a higher price or to differ from the first in form. I hardly thought it likely that you would want to make any alterations in matter or to add: the book is there complete for every reader to see. But, somehow, I don't think as much was made of it on its appearance as might have been, and the only chance of again attracting the reviewers to it is to re-issue it with an entirely new type and in a new form—not at a higher price, if that could be avoided, but I am afraid it couldn't.

I don't know, of course, whether Messrs. Kegan Paul would object to the transfer. Their own knowledge of the probable sale of volumes of verse will prevent them thinking that my

¹ This was to be the second home of *A Shropshire Lad*. Henrietta Street has now become more than ever an important artery of the Market. Where Housman used to talk about his book is actually an open-faced shop in which a wholesale market-gardener carries on his trade. Otherwise the place is unaltered. The third home was at 48 Leicester Square, but, although newly erected in 1901, when I moved in, the building has been pulled down to provide further offices for the Automobile Association.

motive is only mercenary—indeed I am actuated almost entirely by a very sincere love of the book. I say 'almost entirely' because, after all, to issue such a book is always an assistance.

If you are ever in this part of the world, more could be done in a minute or two than in much correspondence, and, after all, there is no very great hurry, although I gather from your brother that the first edition is practically sold out now, so that if anything is to be done at all it ought to be done before the question of reprinting occurs at Paternoster House.

Believe me

Very faithfully yours

GRANT RICHARDS.

On July 20, 1898, writing to me from the Grosvenor Arms, Shaftesbury, and addressing me as 'Dear Sir', he says that he is 'much obliged' to me for my letter but that he has 'thought it proper' to write to Kegan Paul & Co. before taking any immediate step. 'When I hear from them I will write to you again.' Two days later, on July 22—he was ever a very punctual and exact correspondent—he does write again:

'As Kegan Paul say that their feelings would not be lacerated, and as I suppose Mr. Archer's article¹ may create some sort of demand, I shall be very willing that you should bring out a second edition of my poems. I only stipulate for simplicity of get-up and moderateness of price. Your former proposals I have not by me at the moment, but I think you offered to pay me a royalty, or, in case I did not care for it, to hand the amount to a charity. I prefer that it should go to reduce the price at which the book is to be sold.

I shall not be in town till August 3. I expect to be here till Wednesday, and then at the King's Arms, Dorchester.'

I replied on July 23:

'I am delighted to hear that I have at last succeeded in getting *A Shropshire Lad*.

¹ See page 8. William Archer's book first appeared as articles, as I have said, in the *Fortnightly Review*.

You stipulate for simplicity of get-up. It shall be set identically with its previous appearance—no doubt the type has been distributed, but the printer shall have instructions not to alter it in any way.¹ And the price shall be three-and-sixpence, the book being bound in an entirely plain buckram cover of a dark green. I hope you will not consider three-and-sixpence too much. I have made experiments in publishing verse cheaper, and really, if people want verse, they are willing to go that high. The public that cares for verse in England is so very small anyway that the publisher has to put a fair price on his wares to get back his expenses on a small edition.

It is likely that you may want to make one or two alterations or corrections in the book. If so, and if you have a copy by you, will you forward it with the correction made or clearly indicate the folios? Possibly also you might care to put a slight note at the beginning—a few words. What would be better for the success of the book than anything else would be the possible inclusion of one or two new poems, but that would be almost too good to hope for.'

He replied on July 24:

'I think it best not to make any alterations, even the slightest. It was Shelley's plan, and is much wiser than Wordsworth's perpetual tinkering,² as it makes the public fancy one is inspired. But after the book is set up I should like to have the

¹ Evidently we were not sufficiently careful about the printing of this edition: things went wrong. Housman remonstrated mildly, as will be seen, and even as long afterwards as 1935 he wrote to his American correspondent, Houston Martin, who had asked him 'if there had been any corrections in the 2nd edition', that 'alterations were made by the printer. . . . The proofs were not sent to me for correction'. But I hesitate to believe that we were so careless as the last words suggest.

² Such did not always remain Housman's practice. The curious, comparing the various editions of *A Shropshire Lad*, will find many alterations. There is the case of 'Illic Jacet'; and A. R. Cripps, writing to *John o' London's Weekly* of November 27, 1936, gives an instance: 'In the earlier editions (I quote from that of 1912) part of the third verse of poem LII runs as follows:

. . . long since forgotten
In fields where I was known, . . .

In later editions (I quote from one of 1931) "long since forgotten" has been changed to "no more remembered". See p. 36 below.

sheets to correct, as I don't trust printers or proof-readers in matters of punctuation.

3/6 is perhaps the largest sum which can be called moderate, but I suppose it does deserve the name.'

This letter, too, begins 'Dear Sir', and ends 'I am yours very truly.'

The reader must please himself as to whether my first account, or A.E.H.'s account, including the lunch, or the account suggested by the letters in 1898 is the most accurate. I would note, however, that even in 1898 one did not address as 'Dear Sir' a man whom one had met at a party and whose guest one has been at lunch. I cannot help thinking that when he wrote in 1934 of my taking him out somewhere in a cab to lunch, he was mixing me up with John Lane, for John Lane was in 1897 very anxious to secure *A Shropshire Lad* for his own list, and never forgave me for succeeding where he had failed. Moreover if at that time I had taken A.E.H. to lunch it would have been to Romano's, round the corner in the Strand, and so close that it would have been excess of naughtiness to drive.

However, it cannot be of any great importance, except to the Colvins, the Buxton Formans and the Amy Lowells who at the end of the present century may be busying themselves with such small matters,¹ in what manner I made the poet's acquaintance or the exact steps that were taken before I had achieved the position of his publisher. But there is a fragment of conversation between A.E.H. and myself which I printed in *Author Hunting* and which I

¹ 'Nothing is known about this Richards', said Miss Amy Lowell in her *Life of Keats*. She had fruitlessly tried to discover the identity of Thomas Richards, my great-grandfather, whom Keats had described as one of 'three witty people all distinct in their excellence'. Maurice Buxton Forman was able to clear up the little mystery. See his letter, 'Keats and the Richards Family', in *The Times Literary Supplement* of April 26, 1934. A matter of no interest to readers of this book, except as showing to what lengths of research the biographer may go.

am quite sure did, most of it, occur at the beginning of our association. I recall Housman as having repeated that I might produce the second edition of his book and myself as having remonstrated with him about his refusal to take any share of the profits that in my opinion were sure to accrue to its publisher: 'The book will become better and better known. It won't take over two years to sell the second edition. There is bound later on to be a big profit.' Housman's reply was to the point and in the sense of the letter I have quoted: 'I am not a poet by trade; I am a professor of Latin. I do not wish to make profit out of my poetry. It is not my business.' And he then, I thought mistakenly, went on to tell me that he had already been tempted: 'There's a magazine in America—*McClure's*—which every now and then fills up one of its pages with a poem from *A Shropshire Lad*. I suppose I couldn't prevent it even if I wanted to. A man on the staff seems to like the book. It's he who is responsible for such appearances as I make there. Every time they print anything they send me a cheque.'

'And you refuse to take it?'

'I do. I send it back, and I shall no doubt continue to do so; by-and-by they'll learn to save themselves the trouble.'

I discovered later that the man on *McClure's* was Witter Bynner, himself a poet, a poet whom Housman continued to remember. And perhaps I may repeat here that the McClure who gave his name to the magazine and who had chosen a staff that could recognize a poet when it saw one, was S. S. McClure, a friend of Robert Louis Stevenson, and the original of the immortal Pinkerton of *The Wrecker*.¹

¹ Rudyard Kipling in *Something of Myself*: 'To Bliss Cottage one day came Sam Maclure (*sic!*), credited with being the original of Stevenson's Pinkerton in *The Wrecker*, but himself, far more original. . . . He entered, alight with the notion for a new Magazine to be called "Maclure's". . . . I liked and admired Maclure more than a little, for he was one of the few with

Mitchell Kennerley, the American publisher, writing to me on February 24, 1939, adds to our knowledge of this matter and shows how right I was in saying 'most of it' in the first line of the last page:

'In 1901 I got to know Witter Bynner, a young American poet, who was one of the assistant editors of *McClure's*. Bynner talked constantly of *A Shropshire Lad*. . . . In November 1902 I started a literary magazine called *The Reader Magazine*. Bynner was corresponding with Housman and brought me a poem Housman had sent him for *McClure's* which they could not use. I bought the poem from Bynner and printed it. I have no file of the magazine available at the moment.'

My edition—the second—of *A Shropshire Lad* appeared on September 14, 1898. I had told the author that it would not take two years to sell, and it did not. But it, like the first, consisted of five hundred copies only. I have asked myself why, enthusiastic as I was, I was content to print so small a number. Discretion, I suppose, tempering valour; or perhaps it was that the usual number to print of a poet in those days was five hundred. It was, I believe, the Bodley Head habit, and as John Lane was almost alone in being able to secure a sale for his discoveries, it seemed wise to follow his example. But, whatever the reason, the number proved an apt one, for the first demand was by no means brisk. Nor did there on the face of it and apart from my own liking, my own enthusiasm and that of a few others such as Le Gallienne, the Blands and Rothenstein, appear any reason why it should be.

That alone is sufficient proof that the booksellers were not 'stocking' the book, that no one of them, as far as I know, had any confidence in it as a book which would

whom three and a half words serve for a sentence. . . . S. S. McClure wrote during the last war *Obstacles to Peace*, a book of some importance in its time. One may amuse oneself by guessing that it was because McClure was himself laconic (although I never noticed it myself) that Witter Bynner was able to get past him with the Housman poems!

continue to appeal to the public. But even though I had to some extent handicapped the new edition by adding a shilling to the price, it did sell in the month of its appearance one hundred and fifteen copies—getting on for a half of the number it had sold in the whole of the previous twenty-four. In October ninety-eight were sold; in November, one hundred and seven; in December, seventy-seven. Housman was pleased, more than pleased, I think. On December 17 he wrote to me from Byron Cottage, 17 North Road, Highgate, where he then lodged: 'It does you infinite credit that the sale should be so good: I wonder how you manage it', and he relinquished the 'Dear Sir' in favour of 'Dear Mr. Richards'. And I was evidently satisfied myself, for I had sufficient confidence in the book to suggest a third edition in a different form. The first paragraph of his letter dealt with this point: 'I rather like the notion of a pocket edition. Large paper and illustrations are things I have not much affection for. And in any case I should like to correct the proofs and to have them printed as I correct them. Last time someone played games with the punctuation.'

As far as I can ascertain the second edition attracted little attention from the reviewers, but the *Manchester Guardian* did have five inches of appreciation:

'We are glad to notice the reissue of what we cannot but regard as the most interesting volume of verse published in this country for some years past. . . . At first it seemed as if a new "local" poet had arisen, able to do for Shropshire what Barnes did for Dorsetshire and Brown for the Isle of Man. That the rejuvenation of our poetry might come in this way has long been a favourite idea with some careful observers, and the French too have lately been paying attention to their Angevin and Auvergnat poets. Unfortunately it was soon recognized that Mr. Housman was one of the best Latinists in England, and has all the wisdom of the ancients at his back. . . .'

And the *Athenaeum*, October 8, 1898, rendered its belated tribute:

'*A Shropshire Lad*, by Mr. A. E. Housman, is not, of course, new, but Mr. Grant Richards is to be congratulated on securing such excellent verse to reprint. Mr. Housman has attained to an effective simplicity ("attained"—for simplicity nowadays seems unnatural), which, with his brave outlook on life, the frank loves and hates of his lads and lasses, makes a book distinguished above the ruck. It is the sort of easy reading which is hard writing. "The New Mistress" (poem 34), where the rejected lover decides to serve his queen as a soldier, would make an excellent popular song; and lest this should seem a depreciatory remark, we may quote two poignant lines which suggest classical models:

Others, I am not the first,
Have willed more mischief than they durst.

We hope to hear more of Mr. Housman as a poet.'

It is clear that Housman never saw that review, or he would not have allowed himself to complain, or almost to complain, to me that the *Athenaeum* had ignored the book.

Here let me for the sake of accuracy correct certain errors into which Houston Martin fell in one particular paragraph of his article 'With Letters from Housman' in the *Yale Review* of the winter of 1937. Mr. Martin writes:

'While Housman was still teaching in London a great event in his literary career occurred. Early in 1896 he went to the offices of Kegan Paul, and made arrangements to publish at his own expense a small collection of poems which had previously been rejected by another house. This was *A Shropshire Lad*. The little book of less than one hundred pages went unheralded for a time, but Mr. Grant Richards, who was later to bring out the authorised English edition, was so deeply impressed by the poems that he tried to prevail upon the poet to sell him the publication rights. Housman declined for the time, stating that when the first edition had been sold there would be time to

talk about reprinting it. Two years passed, Mr. Richards tells us, before the first edition of *A Shropshire Lad*—five hundred copies—was exhausted.’

Housman did not himself go and arrange with Kegan Paul: A. W. Pollard went for him. The book could hardly be described as having gone ‘unheralded’. There never was—in England at least—an ‘unauthorised’ edition of the book. I did not try ‘to prevail upon the poet to sell’ me the publication rights. Far from it. And since this article is one of the most valuable of the sources from which one builds up the Housman story I had better correct another error. Alfred Housman’s mother did not leave one child only. She left seven—five sons and two daughters. Edward Housman’s second wife had no children.¹

¹ See biographical chart at end.

III

MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE MAN

IT is here perhaps that I should attempt to describe the impression that Alfred Housman, the man as apart from the poet, made on me when I first saw him. I have already done so briefly in *Author Hunting*, but years have passed since those pages were written and his death has made me more than ever anxious to reproduce exactly what I felt in 1898 and wrote down in 1934. To me perhaps more than to most publishers on whom he might have called in 1898—he was then thirty-nine and I was twenty-six—he was in no way strange. I had been to no university but I was very used to scholars and professors, had been used to them on and off since my childhood. I had met more men of learning and classical attainment than I had met genial men of the world, men of business, writers. When the poet came into my room I saw the kind of man whom I expected to see. I have said in my first description that I pondered and rejected certain adjectives: remote; dry; unenthusiastic; unkindling. My visitor, seeing me for the first time, and on a matter of business, had no reason to be other than remote. He was polite but not genial. Dry? No, not dry, but adequate to the occasion. Unenthusiastic? There was nothing for him to be enthusiastic about: he was a poet; he had met one or two publishers already: with this third he was to compromise himself, to enter into a sort of partnership: it would be quite time enough to be enthusiastic when I had proved to him that I could do better than the tepid Kegan Paul. Unkindling? Well, why should he show himself otherwise at this first interview? I fell, and fall, back on the word 'precise'. For my visitor was precise, agreeably precise, but precise. Precise,

as I have said, in speech, bearing, clothes. And economical—economical of words. And sombre? Yes, I have used that word and I will stick to it. He was rather sombre. And I feel that he remained a little sombre to the end. But we know well that to his friends he was not altogether or greatly sombre. I am however concerned at this moment with the man of 1898. There was nothing eccentric on that day in his appearance, his behaviour, his clothing. A dark and unpretentious suit—I think a short black coat and waistcoat, both cut rather high at the neck, and striped trousers—elastic-sided boots—elastic-sided boots were in no way eccentric in those days¹—a bowler hat, an umbrella, an air of preferring to pass unnoticed through the streets. I had seen scores of such men—as far as clothing went—at Oxford, walking down ‘the High’ and round Mesopotamia. He was certainly not difficult to talk to on that occasion. Our subject was there for us; I believe we had settled our business in a quarter of an hour or less. There was no hesitation on his part and certainly there was none on mine. I was adding to my list a work of genius, and I was adding it on such terms that I need never have a moment’s anxiety. An author who would take no royalties, who would not hear of financial reward! ‘If the book proves the success you anticipate then use what you would normally pay to me to reduce the price of subsequent editions.’ On my side I would not let him in any way compromise himself or his

¹ He had small feet. One of his servants to whom at Housman’s death his boots were given, although the servant had himself a small foot, found them too small to wear; and found also, that, owing to the fact that they had elastic sides, they were unsaleable! In the slang of those days they were ‘Jemimas’. I learnt another characteristic fact about Housman. Mr. Ernest Smee of the Cambridge firm of Thurlbourn and Son, tailors and robe-makers, told me that they did not do his tailoring for him but made his gowns, and that on the morning of the day on which King George V opened the University Library Housman came into the shop and bought a gown. With Housman everything had to be done decently and in order. He was going to meet his King and a new gown was essential for the occasion.

book. 'We may not get on,' I protested; 'you may not be satisfied with my stewardship.' So at my suggestion it was arranged that if at any future time he should wish to transfer the book to another publisher he was at liberty to do so. The page in the ledger which sets forth the subsequent early history of *A Shropshire Lad* was inscribed with a note: 'No agreement. No royalty to be paid.'

To go back for a moment to that word 'enigma' as used of Housman. Before it had been used I had written down, in reference both to that first interview and to my later experience: 'He is, one may suppose, respectability itself; he carries no surface secrets.' So I wrote in 1934, and I have no reason to write otherwise to-day, although I am not now quite sure what a 'surface secret' is!

IV

DISAPPOINTING FIGURES

WHAT were the admirers of *A Shropshire Lad* doing in 1899? I ask because in that year the sale dropped away almost to nothing! The author, writing, as I have shown, in December 1898, had proclaimed that the numbers sold did me 'infinite credit. . . . I wonder how you manage it.' He does not seem to have made any comment when the scales tipped violently in the other direction. Here are the figures for the months in 1899: January, 14; February, 17; March, 8; April, 3; May, 1; June, 0; July, 0; August, 6; September, 1—and then no more till the end of the year. As far as I can see from the records, I must have dropped as untimely the notion of a pocket edition, but I evidently did not lose heart, for at the end of February, 1900, I launched an edition of a thousand copies, of which by the close of the half year I had sold (including three hundred that went in bulk to New York, to John Lane's American house) five hundred and ten. In the second half of the year one hundred and thirty-one copies went. In the whole of 1901 two hundred and sixty-three copies were sold. In the following half year (1902) the total was seventy-eight, one copy being returned (presumably by some one who did not think on examination that the poems were good enough at the price!);¹ and in the second half-year, fifty-seven. Still, at the end of 1902 I issued another edition—of two thousand copies!

To the casual reader these figures may not mean very much, but to me, when I came first to dig them out of the old ledger which contains them, they were amazing. By

¹ On October 17, 1936, David Garnett wrote in the *New Statesman*: 'I do not deny that *The Shropshire Lad* is poetry, but the fact is that it bores me, while *Epipsychidion* does not.'

the end of 1902 the book had been in circulation for nearly seven years and only fourteen hundred and seventy-five copies had been bought in England. I do not include the copies that went in bulk to New York. And yet we are, or were, supposed to be a poetry-loving race. It is certain that the poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning and Rudyard Kipling—to say nothing of William and Lewis Morris—had sold in scores of thousands. Why was *A Shropshire Lad* so slow? The fact that John Morley is said by Housman himself not to have cared for it hardly provides a clue.¹ It was not an expensive book. The first, the Kegan Paul, edition cost half a crown. My edition—my first—cost three and sixpence; my second cost three shillings; and even when, in 1904, I gave full weight to the author's strong preference for a really cheap book and brought out a pretty waistcoat pocket edition (at sixpence with a cloth cover; at a shilling bound in leather) there was no immediate and very gratifying response. In fact, looking back, I am not at all sure that much of the sale of the book in the very early days was not due to the fact that, bound by booksellers in cheap leather with projecting edges—an abominable style described as Persian yapp—the little edition proved a pleasant and inexpensive Christmas card! Unfortunately accounts were not kept of the sale of the various volumes in the series in which later I had the mistaken temerity² to include the book—'The Smaller Classics'. All the titles were lumped together and as no royalty had to be paid it is now impossible to say how many Housmans were sold in that series. In that careless time there was no attempt at analysis. My son Charles, when he was with me in my publishing business in about 1922, pleased Housman by getting out a chart, a graph, showing the sales month by month and year by year, from,

¹ Laurence Housman's contribution to *Alfred Edward Housman*. Either edition.

² See pp. 72, 73.

I think, 1905. Housman, however, tucked it away in so safe a place that he could never find it again. The rising figures gave him pleasure, but they suggested no great popularity.

A London daily paper reviewing a cheap pocket edition on June 26, 1903 (I cannot identify the paper: I have only a cutting), showed some lack of humour ('a man lying in his grave . . . would hardly care to know that it was his *fidus Achates* who had succeeded him'¹), discovered of the verse 'Oh like enough 'tis blood, my dear,'² that 'we do not know that anybody has ever written a worse', and also discovered very great beauties and an 'almost perfect little lyric' ('With rue my heart is laden'). And thirty-four years later, Edward Shanks, in *John o' London's Weekly*, refers specially to it on October 9, 1936:

'When I was a month or two on this side of fifteen, in a bookshop in Falmouth which I shall ever remember, I bought a little red-covered book, which was only three or four inches tall. It was not for its reputation that I bought it, for I had never heard of either A. E. Housman or *A Shropshire Lad*. I like to think now that I must have turned over the pages as I stood in the shop and recognized the quality of the verses. The more probable supposition, however, is that I was seduced by the price. It was only sixpence, and I hadn't much more, and it was a very low price indeed to pay for such an attractive-looking little book.

'It would not be surprising to learn that there were many in those days who first became acquainted with *A Shropshire Lad* in some such manner. It was a book that was remarkably fortunate in its presentation to the public, and it came in very handy for gift-making between young people of literary taste and limited means.'

It is likely that for the great public A. E. Housman remained the man who had written the words for several attractive songs. . . . How often did I find that both men and women who professed a love for poetry had never heard of *A Shropshire Lad*! Housman himself told his

¹ A reference to 'Is my team ploughing?' ² In 'The True Lover' (LIII).

brother¹ of the Dean of Westminster's² confusion between the two of them. It was a very general confusion—and still is—in spite of Alfred's death in 1936 and all that the papers had to say about it. The curious will find that the index of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's *My Diaries* attributes *A Shropshire Lad* to Laurence Housman.

At no time did Housman do anything to attract attention to himself or to his poetry. I do not say that he was indifferent to public applause. He was certainly far from indifferent to the evidence of growing public attention as shown by the sales of the two books that appeared before his death. Hall Caine, so very different a man, made no secret of the fact that he 'lusted' after a huge circulation—not only because of the money he would make if each book as it appeared passed into six figures, but, particularly, because he wanted his books to sell better than those of his contemporary, Miss Corelli. The word 'lusted' is one which he used to me, and I would not use it of A.E.H.; but it is certain that Alfred Housman felt great satisfaction as edition came to follow more quickly on edition of *A Shropshire Lad*, and as the book came more and more to be written about. Years later, in the last war, I remember him writing that the more I could lower the price the more copies would in consequence be carried to the front in soldiers' pockets and the more pleased he would be, for it would increase the chances of a bullet, otherwise destined to have a fatal effect, being deflected or weakened by the sure shield of his work.³ Then, he added, he would be certain of fame. And he was more than half serious. Nevertheless, however well the book might sell, he continued to refuse to accept any royalty. I must, undeterred by what he had

¹ Laurence Housman's *A.E.H.*, p. 81.

² The Very Reverend W. Foxley Norris—no great scholar compared with his predecessors.

³ See p. 155.

said in the beginning, have soon returned to that subject, for, writing from Highgate on February 8, 1899, he repeats his refusal: 'I do not want any profits. They had better go towards paying that long bill which Mr. G. B. Shaw sent in to you the other day.' The reference was to a mock account which Bernard Shaw had sent me in the previous September. That account I had shown to E. V. Lucas, at that time my adviser, and I had been glad that he should take it away to print in the *Academy*, which, by then, had passed from the editorship of James Sutherland Cotton into the hands of Lewis Hind and a staff of contributors numbering among others Lucas himself, Wilfred Whitten, E. A. Bennett (the Arnold Bennett of later years) and Francis Thompson. The 'long bill' in question can be seen by the curious in my book *Author Hunting*. It is amusing as a G.B.S. side-light, but it has no other connexion with *A Shropshire Lad* than this brief mention in the poet's letter.

Two things come to my mind as I write: Through all his life Housman seems to have kept a watchful eye on the press, and not only on the papers which might be thought to cover his interests. He liked literary gossip and he would repeat much of what was most worth while and amusing. Neither in those days, nor later, was he withdrawn from the world and apparently indifferent to its opinion in the manner of so many of his less important contemporaries. He subscribed to a press-cutting agency. He must, too, have been 'easier' than he later became. He either must on occasion have sent poems to editors, or he must sometimes have responded agreeably to editorial requests for contributions. Thus 'Illic Jacet' was printed in the *Academy*, on February 24, 1900,¹ and printed, it is interesting to notice,

¹ When 'Illic Jacet' came to be reprinted in *Last Poems* it had several alterations, and is notable as another instance of the occasions on which Housman departed from the principle he had laid down (with reference to

without any sign that the editor knew that he had secured a contribution of unusual importance. From this we may, I think, gather that Housman sent the poem in without having been asked to send it. Editors, being human, are apt to wax eloquent over contributions that they have, with more or less difficulty, achieved, and to allow those that have been thrust upon them to appear without comment. Mrs. Symons has told us¹ that her brother sent 'Illic Jacet' to her when one of her sons was killed in Flanders in 1915: he said that he had written it some years earlier, but he sent it to her because 'it is the function of poetry to harmonise the sadness of the world'.

Later on it was, it seems, Housman's practice to reply to editors, even editors with whom he was in relation, that he had by him no work which would be suitable for their purpose. It is difficult to say why he should have done this, for the appearance in due course of *Last Poems* and, after his death, *More Poems*, is evidence that he must always have had in his desk work for which at any time during the last twenty years of his life editors would have given their ears. 'Illic Jacet' had surely many fellows. One of them, 'The Olive', did find its way into the *Outlook*, in June 1902, on the Declaration of Peace after the Boer War.

what he described as Wordsworth's 'perpetual tinkering'), not to make any alterations even the slightest in what he had written. The word 'chamber' appeared instead of 'bedside' in the third stanza and in the fourth 'low is the roof' takes the place of 'thin is the quilt'. Also in the second and the fourteenth lines there are commas instead of semi-colons. But these may be due to errors on the part of the *Academy* printers. In Mrs. Symons's contribution to *Alfred Edward Housman* (Bromsgrove School, 1936, and New York, 1937) she gives us another example: the parody, 'A Fragment of a Greek Tragedy', in its original version, varied not a little from the version generally in circulation. In the original the first line ran:

O gracefully-enveloped-in-a-cloak

but gave place to:

O suitably attired in leather boots.

And there are several other emendations.

¹ *The Bromsgrovia*n Supplement: *Alfred Edward Housman*. 1936.

GOURMET IN DON'S CLOTHING

NOW I may come to the Housman whom I knew well, to the beginning of our friendship.

One day—I cannot be sure of the exact date, but it may have been in the month of July, 1904—I received by letter an invitation from Housman to dine with him at the Café Royal. I remember saying to myself, Why the Café Royal? In my experience dons did not ask one to dine at the Café Royal. My father would have asked me to have a hurried lunch with him at an Aerated Bread shop, or to dinner at the Cheshire Cheese. Robinson Ellis would have invited me to high tea in his obscure lodging. Herbert Richards would not have asked me to a London meal at all. I pictured to myself that Housman wanted to give me a good dinner, 'to do me proud', and that some one had told him that at the Café Royal one could surely find a good dinner and that one would not be distracted by music. It happened that on the day suggested—possibly July 21—I was already engaged. I had been offered the new pleasure of being driven to the country in a motor-car. It was a Panhard. We were to go to Hindhead. I should, I was promised, be back in plenty of time to dress and arrive at the Café Royal at the hour appointed. But cars in those days were not reliable. The lady who drove me was an expert driver—one of the first women to master the art—and she had an expert chauffeur, but nevertheless on our way back we were held up five times—punctures or the like. Reaching Surbiton, we found the dinner hour was close upon us; it was certain that the car would go no farther for the present. My companion had to act as hostess at a dinner at the Carlton, and it seemed, for several reasons,

to be even more important for her to be punctual than it was for me. I was asked to run quickly to the station and to command a special train to take us to London. Expense, in the circumstances, would matter not at all. The station-master, hearing what I wanted, answered with a smile. Did I know how much a 'special' would cost? I did not, but I replied that it would make no difference, that there was no doubt a scale. He quoted a price. I agreed to it. He smiled again. It would take him longer, he said, to bring a 'special' to Surbiton to carry us to London than it would take us to go by the next train. Nothing was to be done. Both my hostess and I would be late for our dinners, but it could not be helped. In those days little aid could be secured from the telephone. I was dressed in tweeds, but they must serve. I ran up the Café Royal stairs nearly an hour late, but pretty sure in my own mind that no exceptional meal would be spoiled by my lateness.

And there was Housman sitting, if you please, with Horatio Brown, whom I did not know—and they had arrived at a *canard à la presse*! I explained and it appeared that I was forgiven. Then I was shown the menu. I began to suspect from what he said about the courses I had missed that the man whom I had thought of as a don and as a poet must also be something of a gourmet. And I had gone far to ruin his and his guest's dinner! Nevertheless he did what he could to put me at my ease. Adding one thing to another, I discovered that this was, or had been, no dinner automatically suggested by a *maître d'hôtel* but that it had been ordered carefully and with experience by my host and that he was a man to whom good food and the wines that should go with it were a matter of more than ordinary importance. To dine with Housman must always have been both a revelation and an education¹ to one to whom

¹ C. R. W. Nevinson says in *Paint and Prejudice* (London, 1937): 'With

food was just something to eat and wine just a bottle (or a 'flagon'!) of something that one liked. For Housman a good dinner implied an ordered succession of wines. The white-haired and priest-like *sommelier* at the Café Royal of that period knew him well, treated him with respect. A Madeira of distinction would begin the meal, and with the fish would come—until Housman, his friends and, I suppose, a few other customers of the restaurant had exhausted it—a Johannisberger '74, and then a superb Burgundy. Burgundy, white or red, was ever A.E.H.'s favourite wine. Port and old brandy followed in their proper places. I have not known him order champagne, or drink it, save on ceremonial occasions. A cocktail he had never touched until one day when he lunched at the Café Royal as my guest and we arranged that he should make the experiment. He did not, I believe, try twice.

I have said that Burgundy was A.E.H.'s favourite wine.¹ I have talked to him about claret. He was inclined to allow that Bordeaux at its most magnificent might be the finer wine, that the fact that he himself preferred Burgundy was possibly a defect of palate and of character. But he never gave me claret, although on his visits to the Médoc he would choose it naturally, just as he drank the Jura wines

Grant Richards I met A. E. Housman, and to watch the poet dressing a crab was a revelation. I never knew poets ate such food.' He goes on: 'Housman's knowledge of birds and flowers was also unexpected, as I have also noted that intellectuals babble of Nature but neither observe it nor know anything about it.' Sir William Rothenstein, in *Men and Memories*, described Housman as having 'a superfine palate'. He was Housman's guest: 'After dinner came a box at the play.' That was the way that the poet did things, but I never saw him in a box. Stalls, I think.

¹ Years later, in February 1927, I sent A.E.H. a wine-merchant's catalogue in which some early Burgundies were offered. He replied: '. . . thanks also for the Burgundy list and map. I still have a fair amount of the pre-War vintages; and I am told that they do not now take proper care about making the wine, the War having greatly increased the demand among lower classes than used to drink it.

when we were together in that district and Côtes du Rhône of one sort or another between Lyons and Marseilles. The truth is that he had a real interest in wine and a fine and remembering palate. And yet I have heard him say that beer at its best was, to his taste, a better drink:

And malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man.¹

There is, or was before the 1914 war, a beer brewed somewhere on the border of Belgium and Germany which he described as 'the finest drink in the world'. . . .

Housman seldom entertained women at his table. If he were forced by circumstance to do so he would modify his own tastes to suit their presumed preferences. My wife and I went in 1916 to lunch with him in College—at Trinity. He had asked Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, an old friend, pupil of my father's, to meet us, and in deference to my wife a bottle of a rare Yquem was among the wines. . . . On another occasion—in August 1927—calling at my office he discovered that I, my wife, and my step-daughter Hélène, were in Paris at the beginning of a holiday. He was himself going to Paris and, arriving there, sent me a note from the Hôtel Royal Monceau on August 22:

'It would be a pity if we were in Paris together without meeting. Could you come here to lunch or dine to-morrow, naming your own hour. The restaurant here, though I have not sampled it this time, was quite good two years ago. Of course I should be pleased to entertain Mrs. Richards and Hélène too, but would rather see you alone.'

Naturally I went—with pleasure, and with curiosity, for the last sentence was odd. That oddity Housman quickly explained. He was anxious to sound me, he said, as to the possibility of my altering my immediate plans, abandoning my family to their own devices for a fortnight, and going

¹ 'Terence, this is stupid stuff', *A Shropshire Lad*, LXII.

with him for a motor tour in France, in any part of France that I might choose. He confessed to a preference for Burgundy, as he was anxious to drink its wines on their own soil and with the food of the province; moreover, he had been interested in the little he had seen of Burgundian church architecture. Still, I must not let these tastes unduly influence me. The purpose of that day's lunch was to find out from me in what way he had better approach my wife—'I know you haven't been away together for a long time and to alter one's arrangements for someone else's pleasure will be a great trial of her good nature!'

The idea of travelling about France in a car—a thing I had never done in any large way—and, above all, of travelling about Burgundy with Housman in a car, meant, naturally, that I did not hesitate a minute. He had thought that I might hesitate—'I'd ask Mrs. Richards and Hélène to come with us but you know my views about ladies; they are very well, but not for a holiday in a car, an architectural, gastronomic, holiday.' His idea was that he should atone for the apparent lack of gallantry on that day by asking them to lunch on its successor. Also then he would be able to broach the subject of my joining him. 'But where would they like to lunch?' We discussed the obvious restaurants and his choice fell on Foyot's.

Our host arrived at the restaurant before us, and had ordered a meal which he believed would predispose my wife, or any other sensible woman, in his favour. Two bottles of wine were in ice buckets. 'There, Mrs. Richards, is the wine that you and Hélène are to drink—Yquem, 1900; Grant and I are to begin with a Chablis: we shall go on to something better directly.' The sweetness of the Yquem would, he thought, help him to achieve his end. The meal proceeded. My wife, realizing at once how great and unusual a treat had been offered me, was entirely

in favour of the proposed excursion. So all was well. She and Hélène would go on to our destination and would wait for me. Then, as we rose from the banquet, our host turned to Hélène—then a girl of eighteen. ‘How did you like your lunch, Hélène? And the wine?’ ‘It was a lovely lunch, Mr. Housman, and the wine was good—but—but it was just a little too sweet for *my* taste.’ Housman laughed. I was pleased. Such an opinion did credit to her training!

A later chapter shall deal with that proffered holiday.¹

As I am dealing with this subject I may as well correct an exaggeration of Philip Jordan’s in the *News Chronicle* on May 2, 1936. ‘In the early days of air transport’, Jordan said, ‘he [Housman] was known to fly to Paris and back in order to enjoy the pleasures of a lunch at La Pérouse or Marguery’s, his two favourite restaurants.’ No, he never did that; and these were not among his favourite haunts in Jordan’s time or mine. There is another sentence in Jordan’s contribution that I must quote for it sheds a light on Housman’s reputed boorishness: ‘He will be remembered by those who knew him not only for the beauty of the words he wrote, but for a *sweet temper and generosity* to which time and old age could do no hurt’. Jordan is a good witness. As a youth he saw a good deal of A.E.H. in my house and later had some acquaintance with him at Cambridge.

¹ See p. 222 below.

VI

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, MANILIUS AND JUVENAL

THE third edition of *A Shropshire Lad* appeared in the early spring of 1900. 'The new get-up is very pretty,' the author wrote, but whether he meant this as a compliment or not I never knew. I believe, however, that he was to be taken literally and that he never minded using a word which has fallen into disrepute. Nor did he ordinarily indulge in irony in his correspondence—with me at least. Certainly he did in his letters avoid pedantry, superiority and any show of having better taste than his fellows. And yet his exactitude of phrase was, when he was writing with definite intention, something of which to be wary. His exactitude of phrase and his exactitude of observation. Thus, when *The Times* printed in November, 1932, an article drawn from J. L. Garvin's *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* in which Chamberlain is described as wearing an eyeglass when he made his first speech in the House of Commons, Housman writes on that very day to the paper flatly to contradict the statement. I will quote nearly the whole letter as it has interest in connexion both with Disraeli and with Chamberlain:

'... He wore a pair of spectacles with black and rather thick rims. Disraeli is described as "frail and cadaverous". His complexion was a pale olive, but did not look cadaverous from the Strangers' Gallery; and of frailty there was not a sign. Sitting as he did with one knee crossed over the other, he showed a very good pair of legs; he walked in and out of the House with a long, easy stride; and after answering a speech of Hartington's, a few days earlier or later, about the Suez Canal shares, he threw himself back into his seat almost with violence.

Chamberlain's speech was very rapid, and at first too loud

for the size of the Chamber. He showed no sign of nervousness except that once, after saying "I protest, Mr. Speaker", he rather hurriedly changed the phrase to "I humbly protest".

Sir Austen Chamberlain immediately challenged the correction: 'I am confident that the Professor is mistaken. . . . I do not believe my father ever possessed such a pair of spectacles as Professor Housman describes. . . .' The matter is not in itself very important, but it is characteristic of Housman to write so confidently, so dogmatically almost, of a memory gathered when he was a youth of seventeen. I have it on the best authority that he did not keep a diary. The truth is that his passion for accuracy did not prevent his being very positively wrong on occasion. Thus he believed that he remembered his own baptism! And on a later occasion, as we shall see, he asserted that his mother was Cornish when he must have meant Devon.¹

¹ Housman's mother did not come from Devon; but her father did, and he was proud of his descent from the Drakes of that county and had the Drake dragon (Draco) on some of his silver plate. His father, when he was a boy of eight, had moved from Sidmouth to Plymouth. When Housman was in Cornwall with me in 1916 he never referred to any Cornish connexion. Furthermore, in his copy of Prince's *Worthies of Devon*—the 1810 edition—the following note was written as a footnote to p. 333, which deals with Robert Drake of Littleham, by A. E. Housman's grandfather, Dr. John Williams, to whom the book had belonged:

'For the information of my children, I here state, that my Grandfather, Wm. Potter, of Sidmouth, in the County of Devon, and his two daughters, Mary Wife of John Newton, and Sarah, Wife of John Williams, my father, did receive annually a dividend of the said monies [left to kinsfolk by Robert Drake's will] by right of consanguinity—When about nine years of age, I accompanied my mother to Exmouth, and shared in the Founder's feast or "Twelve mess of the Kinsfolk". This happened on the twenty fourth day of September, in the year one thousand, seven hundred, and eighty eight; when she received four Guineas; but our removal to Plymouth soon after, prevented [subsequently] a personal application, which the trustees generally require. My Grandfather, Aunt, and Mother, received together about *fourteen* Pounds. Let no future Sir Bernard presume to challenge my children, for bearing his family arms. [The Drake dragon or red wyvern.] See Page 329. Signed Apr. 5. 1820.

John Williams, D.D.
Stroud, Gloucestershire.'

The failing memory of approaching old age may account for that and other errors, but Housman certainly did grow less positive with the years.

I have described Housman as precise and in some ways he was old-fashioned. For instance, I have never known him use the telephone or suggest it to his friends as a mode of communication. But he would use postcards. (My memory tells me that the use of postcards has always been rather common among dons. I remember when I was a child posting a card from my father to another don in which he announced, without any other concealment than the use of an initial, that he was afraid no other course could be taken, and that *Sō-and-so* must be sent down!) The first postcard that I had from Housman dealt with a sufficiently important matter. I, like so many other people who cared for poetry in those days, was becoming anxious as the years passed and no new collection of poems came from the author of *A Shropshire Lad*. On March 17, 1900, I wrote asking him if there were any hopes of a new book. 'I am afraid there is no chance of another book from me yet awhile.' That he wrote on a postcard from Byron Cottage on March 30, 1900. 'Yet awhile'! I hardly foresaw that the new volume would not appear for twenty-two years!

Of 1901 I have no letters or records save those of the increasing sale of *A Shropshire Lad*, but when in the early thirties I was rearranging the modern shelves of his collection of books at Trinity I came across, tucked away between two volumes, a printed appeal, dated May, 1901, from the Executive Committee of the British School at Rome in aid of the School's funds. Whether Housman responded to the appeal I do not know, but he used the blank side of the circular to make notes which puzzled me. At one end are unconnected sentences in English:

The eldest of the blacksmiths taught me music and gave me a harp.
The mother with her four daughters travelled from Rome to Athens.

The lonely inhabitant of the wood has climbed a tall oak.
The honest farmer told the king that he had found a large number of cows (?)

The general tells the soldiers to spare the . . .

One of the consuls is at Syracuse and the whole army is near Syracuse

At the other end is a passage in Latin:

Propinquant hostes et mox aderunt: nos cessamus. Cujusnam opem expectatis? ego despero. Arma sumite in manus vestras ut morti incurratis; nam melius est nunc perire quam in omne tempus servos esse.¹

I drew Housman's attention to these pencil notes and asked if I might keep them. He assented and I put them on one side, intending to ask later what they were about, but the matter passed from my mind. An old pupil of Housman's says that both English and Latin sentences Housman must have set, or thought of setting, for translation by his students.

My next letter is from Byron Cottage on October 12, 1902:

Dear Richards

If I may drop the Mr. I am sending simultaneously by parcel post the text and notes of the edition of Manilius I,² and

¹ Roughly translated: 'The enemy are drawing near and soon will be upon us; we are doing nothing. What help are you looking for? I am without hope. Take your arms into your hands, that ye may rush upon your death; for it is better to perish now than to be for ever slaves.' Such, I am inclined to think, might have been Housman's opinion had he lived into the early Autumn of 1938. And again, the lines might have suggested to John Masefield, had he seen them, the four lines in *Pompey the Great*:

Though we are ringed with spears, though the last hope is gone,
Romans stand firm, the Roman dead look on.
Before our sparks of life blow back to him who gave,
Burn clear, brave hearts, and light our pathway to the grave.

² I am told that there are still Housman enthusiasts who do not know that he was a great scholar. Professor O. L. Richmond ends his paper on Housman in the *University of Edinburgh Journal*, Autumn 1938: 'His poetic gift,

also a specimen of the Teubner classics to show what sort of book I have in my mind's eye. The notes should be printed at the foot of the text, and should run right across the page, not stand in two columns: the type of the notes should be smaller in proportion to that of the text than is the case in the German book: the paper should be thicker, I think. As to my manuscript, the curved line ~~~~ under words and figures and letters is meant to indicate Clarendon type (I am not sure if it is the correct sign); and the spaces which I have left between sentences are meant to be preserved in printing. In the text, I want the numbers in the *left*-hand margin, as I have put them: and the letters 'j' and 'v', wherever they appear in the type-written copy, are to be altered into 'i' and 'u' respectively: I suppose this is a change which may be left to the printer.

Before anything is done, I should be glad if you could let me have an estimate of what the printing &c is likely to cost, as my resources are not inexhaustible. In addition to what I am now sending, there will be a preface of about 25 pages (as far as I can judge), and about an equal amount (25 pages) of additional matter at the end.

When the next edition of the *Shropshire Lad* is being prepared, it would save trouble to the compositor as well as to me if he were told that the 3rd edition is almost exactly correct, and that he had better not put in commas and notes of exclamation for me to strike out of the proof, as was the case last time.

I think this is all I have to say.

I remain

Yours sincerely

A. E. HOUSMAN

This letter, of course, did not fall upon me out of the blue. There must have been some conversation about the

so nearly perfect in its kind, so sure of a measure of immortality, is yet a less gift than his matchless contribution to scholarship' (see p. 459); and A. S. F. Gow in his paper in the *Bromsgrove Alfred Edward Housman*: 'In the hierarchy of scholars his name must, on any estimate, stand higher than in that of poets.' In *The Profession of Poetry*, published by the Clarendon Press in 1929, Professor H. W. Garrod says: 'He stands to-day the first scholar in Europe; if this country has had a greater scholar, it will be only Bentley.'

Manilius before Housman came to send me the manuscript. It would have been more natural for him to have sent it to one or other of the publishers who were in the habit of publishing Greek and Latin texts, but when he gave he gave liberally, and having entrusted me with his poetry, he no doubt entrusted me as a matter of course with this very different evidence of his activity. And on my side there is later evidence that I, although it was reasonably certain that the publication could only result financially in a loss, was anxious—as some return, no doubt, for the fact that all the profits of *A Shropshire Lad* came into my pocket¹—to take the cost of production on my own shoulders in spite of his wish for an estimate of cost. Anyhow, the production proceeded, the printing having been entrusted to R. & R. Clark of Edinburgh. Housman writes again on November 8 from the same address:

'4/6 is my notion of the proper price, for several reasons: firstly because I want the book to be read abroad, and continental scholars are poorer than English; secondly as a protest against the usual English prices—e.g. 12/6 for a single play of Sophocles by Jebb—which I have always supposed to be due to the cloth binding and gilt lettering; thirdly because I hardly like to ask more for a single book of a poem which contains five, when Lachmann's celebrated commentary on the whole of Lucretius only costs 7/6. The Teubner book which I sent you as a specimen is priced at 4/-; true, it is a shocking bad book, but that makes no difference. Still, if 4/6 is one of those prices which publishers and booksellers for some mysterious reason dislike, and if your heart is set on 5/-, I have no strong objection; as I see that my notes in print are more voluminous than I imagined. The division of the notes in the proofs sent

¹ Not that those profits, from the strictly commercial point of view, were very large. In *Author Hunting* I have said that I made twelve pounds out of my edition of *A Shropshire Lad* in the autumn of its publication. That was after carrying forward the unsold copies at the cost of their production. Nothing was charged in the ledger against the book for what are known as 'overhead charges'—office expenses, cost of handling, and so on.

is satisfactory: the important thing is that the note on any verse should *begin* on the page which contains that verse. As to the Greek σ , I wish the letter to have this form at the end as well as in the body of words: fifty years hence all Greek books will be printed so.

'I am hoping to receive from Rome in about a week's time some information about manuscripts in the Vatican which may involve additions or alterations in the notes on the first 80 lines.'

My next letter from Housman, dated November 20, 1902, again from Byron Cottage, deals with the proofs of a new edition of *A Shropshire Lad*, the first two references being to the poem 'On your midnight pallet lying':

'I return the proofs, to which I have made corrections on pages 18, 19, 21, 35, 52 and 92. What I want on pages 18 and 19 is to have the seventh line of each stanza put level with the second and fourth: I don't know if I have expressed this desire in the correct form.

'My attempt to get the readings of the Rome manuscripts through the British School there seems to have had no effect; but I am making another effort through another channel, the friend of a friend of mine, and I hope to succeed shortly.'

The mention at the end of this letter of the British School at Rome is a coincidence!¹ On November 30, 1902, he is able to tell me that he has 'got the collation of the Vatican MSS. . . . The alterations to be made in the remainder of the first 80 verses (the part affected by the Vatican MSS.) are not so formidable as in these first 37': and he ends his letter with this paragraph:

'There is one general instruction which had better be given to the printers. When a colon or semi-colon comes at the *end* of a quotation in italics, it ought to stand upright, not to slant (I have written "rom." in the margin, but I am not sure if that is the correct way to signify what I mean). With notes of interrogation, if they belong to the sense of the quotation, the case is different.'

¹ See p. 46.

This very exact statement of his wishes with regard to the use of colons and semi-colons, with his letters of October 12 and November 8, shows him to have been as determined to get what he wanted as ever Bernard Shaw had been four years earlier,¹ but he made no claim to Shaw's omniscience in the matter. Housman's printers had been Shaw's too.

The Manilius title-page worried Housman. Title-pages have always been a trial to those few authors and publishers who care for and can appreciate the detailed appearance of their books. On January 5, 1903, he writes:

'I have made a good many changes in the title-page, which ought to be as Latin as possible, I think; and I must confess that I don't know the Latin for Leicester Square. I hope you will approve.'

There follow letters of a technical nature dealing with the Manilius proofs, but in one, that of January 27, he says:

'As I was unwell in the Christmas holidays, the preface is still only partly written, and I do not get on with it very fast now that the work of the term has begun again.'

That of February 12 reads:

'With regard to your note of to-day, I don't quite know the meaning of "the preliminary",² but I enclose the dedication which is to follow the title-page. I suppose it had better be printed in italics. If it will not all go on one page, it should be broken at the point I have marked, and a catch-word should be added.³

'After this, and before the text and notes, there will come a long introduction, which, as I said, is not yet finished; but there is nothing else of the nature of a preliminary.

'Many thanks for the copies of the Shropshire Lad which I received to-day. The colour attracts the eye, and the convolulus-leaf detains it in fascinated admiration.'

¹ See *Author Hunting*.

² The half-title, the title-page, the dedication page, the table of contents, &c., that precede the text of the book.

³ See Appendix.

The third paragraph is about the 1903, scarlet paper-covered, foolscap-octavo shilling edition. He may, of course, have been making fun of me. I was not always proud of the book's outward appearance. In particular I came to hate a gaudy jacket used on one of the pocket editions. It is fair to say, though, that the jacket in question was designed not specifically for *A Shropshire Lad* but for a series of little books in which it was temporarily included. What Housman describes as a convolvulus-leaf is the ornament that appears so often in his books of verse, on the title-page of *Last Poems* and on the title-page of this book.

On March 15, 1903, the Manilius having been announced to the world, Housman writes:

'In your announcement of my Manilius there are two misprints: *instruit* should be *instruxit* and *amendationes* should be *emendationes*. They do not cause me any piercing anguish, and—I only write about it because I thought you might like to know.

'The preface proceeds very slowly now that it is term-time. I hope I shall be able to send you an instalment of it in a fortnight or so.'

Then on June 5, 1903, we have come to the question of the papers to which the book is to be sent for review:

'There is no American publication which regularly reviews classical books, but the American Journal of Philology (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore) reviews a certain number, and I have no objection to your sending them a copy. But I doubt if they would review it. American scholars are mere grammarians and collectors of statistics, and what we call critical scholarship hardly exists there. . . . The Classical Review circulates in America and has American sub-editors.'

About this time began to arrive from the outside world two series of letters which Housman came to consider something of a trial. He used to say that he hated answering letters, so that, as these were generally addressed in the first

place to me as his publisher, he was often glad to have me answer them. The first series dealt with the question whether he would allow poems from *A Shropshire Lad* to appear in anthologies. Through good nature he did give permission once or twice, but after that he became adamant in refusing. His idea *may* have been that he looked on the book as a sequence of poems and in consequence disliked any one being divorced from its fellows. One of the apparent exceptions was not an exception at all, although I did not hear the facts until more than twenty years had passed; they were given to me in a letter, undated but post-marked 'Cambridge 10.15 P.M. 23 September, 1923', that I must quote here, away from its year, to make my point:

'I have seen a reply which your firm sent to Longman when they asked if they might include two pieces from *Last Poems* in Bridges' selection of poetry for schools. It is quite the sort of answer which I should wish you to write, though in point of fact I do not unconditionally prohibit the use of *Last Poems* as I do of *A Shropshire Lad*; but I have given Bridges my permission to include the two pieces in question.

'I had better also tell you that I believe that he (being Poet Laureate, and an unscrupulous character, and apparently such an admirer of my verse that he thinks its presence or absence will make all the difference to his book) intends to include three poems from *A Shropshire Lad*, though I have not given him my permission, because he thinks he has reason to think that I shall not prosecute him. Well, I shall not; and you will please turn a blind eye too.'

Sir William Rothenstein did something of the same kind when he printed in the second volume of his *Men and Memories* a very brief humorous poem, a skit on a poem of Frances Cornford's, which Housman had written out for him or a member of his family. I, who knew how resolutely Housman had refused to allow any of his humorous poems (since his early years at least) to appear

in public, was astonished to see it, and wondered how it was that the rule had been relaxed. I asked.

'Heavens, no! I gave no permission. Rothenstein knew better than to suggest it. He knew I should refuse.'

'Then what are you going to do?'

'Nothing.'

I confess that I had had it in mind to ask permission to print in my own second book of recollections a long Cautionary Poem—'As into the garden Elizabeth ran' is its first line—which Housman on one of his visits had written in an ambitious autograph album of my wife's, but after that brief, characteristic conversation I abandoned the idea. Now however, by the courtesy of Housman's executors, I am allowed to print it in facsimile.

The second series of letters which used not so much to annoy Housman as to take up time and energy which he could ill spare was that in which composer after composer and music-publisher after music-publisher would ask permission to set this poem or that to music and to print the words with the music. In response to such requests he almost always gave, or told me to give, permission. A Mr. Ettrick must have been one of the first to write in this connexion. Like most of the others he offered a fee. Permission was given; a fee was refused. Writing on June 22, 1903, Housman says:

'I have not exacted fees from other people who have set other pieces, so I don't want to begin now. Vanity, not avarice, is my ruling passion; and so long as young men write to me from America saying that they would rather part with their hair than with their copy of my book, I do not feel the need of food and drink.'

America? Yes, *A Shropshire Lad*, very much more quickly there than in England, became a success. Young people would, quite early in its history prepare papers on

Housman; ladies would come on missions from the Middle West in order to place chaplets of laurel leaves on the poet's brow and to lay addresses at his feet; there were, I believe, Housman Societies. The publication of some of the poems in *McClure's Magazine*, which had then a huge and important circulation, had much to do with the quickness of this appreciation. No one ever thought of doing anything of the kind for the poet in England, or if one did he had not the energy of the founders of the Browning Society!¹

To go back to the first volume of the *Manilius*. I sent Housman in June, 1903, a bill for its production, expressing no doubt some regret that it had cost more than the estimate had suggested. On receiving it he wrote:

'As I started with a vague notion that the book would cost about £100, I regard anything short of that as clear gain. Also my classes have been unusually large this year and the extra fees may possibly balance this extra expenditure; which tempts one to believe in the existence of Providence. I rather think that the difference between the printers' estimate and the actual cost is caused not merely by my additions and alterations but also by an initial miscalculation on their part as to the amount of matter contained in the manuscript.

'Would you add to the list of people to whom copies are to be sent J. W. Mackail. . . .'

On July 18 he sent me a cheque. The amount was £83. 9s. We had, I may say, compromised on the question

¹ Beverley Nichols told a story which illustrates how widely *A Shropshire Lad* came to be circulated in America: 'Then there was another man, heavy-jowled and extremely plain, whom I met in Providence. He had manufactured, during his life, a depressingly large number of braces—those articles which in America are whimsically termed "suspenders". We sat in the same hotel, while I informed him, in general terms, of the braces situation in Europe. He was not very interested until he learned, from a chance remark, that I wrote books. And then a light came into his eyes. He ran into the hall, got his bag, and produced from a nest of braces a first edition of *A Shropshire Lad*, which he knew by heart. I have seldom heard poetry recited so beautifully.' But I wonder whether it was a veritable first edition or a copy of the first edition to bear an American imprint.

who should pay the cost: he was to pay the bill, but I was to add nothing for expenses in my own office. With the cheque came a request that I should tell him of any press-cutting agency which could be 'trusted to collect notices from the learned journals of the Continent', and instructions to send a copy of the book to Monsieur Louis Brandin in Paris. On July 24 he delights me by saying that 'Mackail congratulates me on my publisher, "who has produced quite an elegant book"; and he is quite an authority'; and depresses me by complaining mildly that he 'rather gathers . . . that the copies sent to my friends were not accompanied by an indication that they were sent by me'. Two days later he writes that he would like the two morocco-bound copies (for which he had asked earlier) 'to have the edges cut all round and gilt all round. No gilt should be put on the edges of the interleaved copy, which is merely for me to scribble in. . . .' He adds: 'I would be glad if you would take such steps as may seem good to you for collecting press-cuttings from the learned journals of the Continent.'

On August 11 a rare note of impatience appears: the morocco-bound books do not come to hand quickly and I have disappointed him:

'I don't want to appear impatient, but I shall leave for the Continent in about a week's time, and I particularly desire to have one of the morocco-bound copies of the Manilius before then, in order to send it to India to the friend to whom the book is dedicated. I suppose it must be nearly ready now.

'The Duchess of Sutherland is under the impression that I not only gave her my consent to print some verses of mine in a novel of hers, but also wrote her a kind letter about it; neither of which things did I ever do. I have no doubt that you gave her my consent, as you have given it to other people; and I have no particular objection: but when it comes to writing kind letters to Duchesses I think it is time to protest.'

¹ Housman's memory was playing him false, I think. 'Astronomy' was

M. J. Jackson was the friend to whom the *Manilius* was dedicated.

There followed a letter dated August 14 saying that he would be leaving England on the 21st and that he would be at the Normandy Hotel in Paris until the 26th. 'I will try to find out the exact address of the *Revue Critique*' to which I was to send the *Manilius*. Then came a postcard from Venice, written on September 10:

'If I can find sufficient industry I hope to go on with the *Manilius*; but not immediately, because at this moment I am rather sick of writing and want to read: moreover book II is the most serious job of the whole lot. I am sure your father's annotations would be valuable.¹

'Either you or I or the Duchess of Sutherland seems to have a treacherous memory: let us hope it is the Duchess.'

That Housman should have stopped at the Normandy Hotel in the rue de l'Échelle in Paris was a coincidence. It was the hotel to which I regularly went. When opportunity came I asked him what had led him to that particular corner. He answered evasively. I should know one day, he said with a smile, but in the meantime he would continue to run the risk of our finding ourselves at the same address. The mystery should soon resolve itself. And it did. After the passage of a year or two he sent me word that I could now enjoy the comforts of the Normandy untroubled by the fear of his untoward arrival. It appeared that going to the hotel by chance, late one night and tired, he decided

the poem in question, and it appeared in *Wayfarers' Love*, an anthology edited by the Duchess of Sutherland and brought out in aid of her Cripples' Guild in North Staffordshire. 'Mr. Housman wrote the letter himself really and truly', I am assured by the Duchess, but, unhappily, it seems now to have gone beyond recall. I cannot find that the Duchess used any Housman verses in a novel. Later 'Astronomy' was included in *Last Poems*.

¹ I had not set my father up as an authority on *Manilius*, but among his books was an edition of the poet with some annotations and suggestions that he had made. I had offered it to A.E.H.

to do what the true gourmet seldom allows himself to do in Paris—he dined in his hotel, and discovered, in consequence, a bin of truly desirable red Hermitage.¹ The existence of that bin he kept to himself! Certainly he was not going to tell me about it. (He had learned that I was an enthusiast about the wines of the Côtes du Rhône.) But now at length the bin—too late discovered—was exhausted—exhausted, that is to say, as far as bottles were concerned. ‘You, my dear Richards, are at liberty to drink the few half-bottles that remain,’ he said! There is, or was, not much good Hermitage to be found in Paris and I could understand Housman’s reticence.

The last letter I have quoted was of 1903. I find no other written record until July 27, 1904, when I must have sent him copies of yet another new edition of *A Shropshire Lad*:

‘Thanks to your treatment last night I am quite restored to health this morning.

‘I enclose a copy of our joint work. The results of your collaboration are noted on pages 4, 22, 45, 55, 71, 77, 78, 92, 116 (this last occurred also in the previous edition, where I overlooked it). I don’t mark details of punctuation.

‘I am bound to say however that the leather binding makes a very pretty book.’

Three weeks later—on August 18—he writes me about a book which we must have talked of—‘the text and notes of the Juvenal which you are burning to publish are now finished’. He was proposing to go abroad on August 27—and did, to Paris—and promised to send me the manuscript before that day. ‘My notion is that the book should be identical with the Manilius, which is so much admired by people who are connoisseurs in these matters.’ Then on

¹ ‘The manliest French wine I ever drank,’ George Saintsbury says of a Hermitage of 1846 in his *Notes on a Cellar Book*; and George Meredith, in *The Egoist*, makes his Dr. Middleton, himself ‘a scholar of great repute’, say that ‘an aged Hermitage has the light of the antique’.

'le 5me Septembre 1904' he writes from Péra-Palace, Constantinople:

'I have not received an acknowledgement of the priceless manuscript I sent you when I left England ten days ago. Anxiety is preying on my health, and if the Sultan next Friday observes my haggard countenance in the crowd, he will certainly suppose me to be a conspirator and order me to be thrown into the Bosphorus: then you will have to intervene, as John Lane did in the case of William Watson; and that will cost you much more than a postage stamp. If my money holds out I shall be here long enough to hear from you.'

On September 23, 1904, he is back in Highgate and I may perhaps be forgiven if I print a long letter which is likely to interest printers and publishers more than the general admirers of Housman's genius. It displays again his infinite capacity for taking pains:

'The printers' estimate for the Juvenal seems absurd, and they don't appear to understand the facts.

'They say that "the extent of both books is nearly the same". That is true if they are talking about the amount of paper, but false if they are talking about the amount of print. The chief expense of the Manilius must have been the voluminous notes: the notes in the Juvenal, I should think, are not one quarter of what the Manilius notes were. The *text* of the Juvenal is about four times the text of the Manilius; but the text, though it fills a lot of paper, cannot be expensive to set up;—it is merely 4000 lines or so. The only thing that I can think of to explain their estimate is that the Juvenal notes will require a much larger proportion of Clarendon type, which perhaps is expensive.

'Moreover the final cost of the Manilius was largely due, I had supposed, to the rather numerous alterations which I made in proof. Their original estimate for the Manilius was nothing like £84: it was something less than £50. (True, this was when I thought the introduction would be only 25 pages, and it afterwards ran to 75 pages; but they now say that introductions are cheap to print, so this won't explain the difference.)

Possibly you have the original estimate for the Manilius in your archives: if so, it would be useful and instructive to compare it.

'You understand what my point is: a page of the Manilius consisted on the average of less than 12 lines of text (large print) and more than 35 lines of notes (small print). In the Juvenal the proportion, I should think, will be more like 25 lines of text to 15 lines of notes, or often less: I remember one place (at the end of the 5th satire) where there are 30 lines of text without a single note.

'I can pay the sum they ask, but I very much object to, as Constantinople and the Orient Express are both pretty expensive, and I want to go to Italy next spring. . . . If they are now printing the text and notes, as I understand they are, it ought to be quite easy to ascertain the proportion they bear to one another.'

It is enough to add that the printers justified their estimate, and that Housman became satisfied.

VII

HIS PUBLISHER'S FAILURE

TOWARDS the end of 1904 difficulties beset me, difficulties which I was not to overcome. I, who had never been possessed of much capital, but had perhaps been tempted beyond prudence by too much credit, had been over-trading and spending too much money. I took, I had to take, what came to me in punishment, and I am not prepared to say that I did not deserve it all. It was, however, a bitter experience, this falling down of all I had built up with so much pride and, yes, hard work and devotion. But all was not to be lost. I was to receive much kindness. Housman had written to me on November 17 complaining in his own mild way of the delay in sending proofs of his *Juvenal*: the printers 'by this time' ought to 'have done something to it'. On November 24 he writes again:

'Almost immediately after I wrote to you last week, I heard, and was very sorry to hear, that there is a crisis in your affairs. I hope that this will come out straight, and in the meantime I do not want to worry you with correspondence. I only write just to let you know, as is proper, that I propose to try to find someone else to undertake the publishing of the *Juvenal*, though I shall not find anyone to do it for nothing, as you were good enough to say you would. I suppose I may assume that you have no objection, and I will take silence to mean consent.

'I don't know if you would have leisure or inclination to come and dine with me somewhere next week, but I should be very pleased if you would: say Friday Dec. 2nd. Perhaps I could get my brother to come.'

Four days later he wrote:

'Café Royal, 7.30, Friday next. My brother will come.

I have not done anything about the *Juvenal* beyond asking

the printers whether they had begun to print it. The Shropshire Lad I don't at all want to interfere with.'

I hope I am not stretching imagination too far when I say that I thought at the time (and still think) that the suggestion that he would ask his brother Laurence to meet me was influenced by a wish that I should see that his support, his sympathy, was not half-hearted. I had not, I am sure, met Laurence before in the company of his brother. In the commonwealth of letters Alfred knew Laurence to be a person whose goodwill would count. After dinner we went—perhaps following a visit to a music-hall, for in those days there were no cinemas and, oddly enough, I do not recall the name of any play that I saw with him—to the Criterion Bar, where my host gave me a 'John Collins'—an occasion worth noting as I had never before, and have never since, seen him in a bar. The evening had its sequels. We had talked at dinner of old-fashioned food and drink, and Laurence Housman promised to send me an ancient bottle of mead—a promise which he kept; and I, who should have had at that moment of my life too much sense and discretion to do anything of the kind, engaged my host and my fellow guest to dine with me a little later at the Carlton, then flourishing under Escoffier and Jacques Kraemer. Kraemer had, months before, told me that even hedgehogs could be found for their clients (although there was little demand for them). It was with the promise of hedgehogs that I tempted the brothers. The chef cooked them in such a way that the dish had likeness to haggis, and we were bidden to drink whisky with it. The meal was altogether unusual: the second course was snails accompanied by white wine. Alfred, his brother writes in *The Unexpected Years*, thought less well of the hedgehog than Laurence did: he 'preferred the snails'! I should not at that moment have been dining

at the Carlton at all, and so A.E.H. told me. But I made up for it by other economies. Just then I did need to be lifted out of myself and, being alone in London, I was the better for intelligent company.

No further letters, as far as I know, till March 1, 1905. In the meantime things had proceeded in their natural and sordid way. Housman's own position was clear enough: as I have shown, he had parted with no rights in the case of *A Shropshire Lad*; the stock of the Manilius was his property; the Juvenal he had intended all along to pay for so he had nothing to do but to take the account over from the printer. Yes, his position was clear enough, but think of the trouble. . . . He was a Professor of Latin and a poet, and he had to cope with all these difficulties! But he was so considerate in his treatment of the matter from beginning to end that he never made me more uncomfortable than did my own conscience. That letter of March 1 said that he was looking after things—in my interest, it was clear, as well as in his own. But it contained one characteristic sentence. A lady with a coy Christian name had written asking if she might publish his words with her music. 'The applicant may publish the songs as far as I am concerned, but I had rather that you should tell her so, as I do not want to write letters to a lady whose name is Birdie!'

On March 16 A.E.H. writes to thank me for a privately printed translation of Book I of the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, with notes and essays, by my father, Franklin Richards: 'I have not read that author, so my mind will be much improved'; and he adds that he 'ought to finish writing the Juvenal preface in ten days. . . . I hope you are as flourishing as can be expected'. On April 11 he tells me that the Juvenal is 'all printed except the preface, so that the question of publication is close at hand'. Then, six days later:

'I am very sorry to see your father's death in to-day's paper;

both for the loss to scholarship of his simple and disinterested love of learning, and also that this grief should come upon you in addition to your other troubles.'

On May 4: 'The last proofs of Juvenal arrived to-day. . . .'

Yes, the Juvenal was practically ready for publication. Who was to publish it? My affairs were in the hands of the Court; I was for a time debarred from starting another business. What could be done? With the assistance of my creditors the difficulty was surmounted. A new business was started of which I was to be, and did immediately become, manager. 'I am proud to be your first author', Housman wrote to the proprietor on June 1, 1905. His encouragement, his approval, meant everything; and in due course the firm of E. Grant Richards opened an office at 7 Carlton Street, Regent Street.

On June 8, Housman, hearing that I wanted to see him, sends me a card for some unspecified entertainment:

' . . . in case you may be willing and able to use it. If you go I shall be there about 9 o'clock, just drunk enough to be pleasant, but not so incapable as a publisher would like an author to be. If you don't go, you will probably escape a very tiresome entertainment.'

I went, but neither then nor at any other time did I surprise my author in a state of inebriety!

Then, on June 13, in answer to a letter in which I had enclosed my idea of what would be a satisfactory way of announcing the Juvenal—an announcement in which I had alluded to his authorship of *A Shropshire Lad*—he writes to me, from 30 Albemarle Street, that my 'flamboyant production is not on any account to be printed. The following', he suggests, 'might serve':

' "A critical edition of Juvenal by Mr. A. E. Housman, intended to make good some of the principal defects in

existing editions, and especially to supply a better knowledge of the manuscripts, will be published. . . ." (No nonsense about Shropshire Lads).'

There followed delay on which Housman comments characteristically on June 27, 1905: 'I suppose it is more annoying to you than it is to me, so I will not declaim about it.' And on July 6, when I asked him whether he wanted the book advertised anywhere:

'Many thanks. I don't think any advertisement is required: books of this sort are best advertised by reviews and the list of "books received" in the learned journals.'

On August 3 a letter full of the Housman quality, in reply to some inquiry of my own, based on a bookseller's 'query'—or had Dr. Robertson Nicoll written a paragraph in the *British Weekly*?

'My competent or incompetent hand is quite innocent of any intention to edit Catullus; but Nonconformist ministers will say anything. They believe in justification by faith, and act accordingly.¹

'Thanks for the German review (very hostile) of the Manilius. It is written by a young man who makes false quantities.'

On September 21 he is in Paris again. 'I have been moving about in Italy.' Returning immediately, he sends me a letter, again very much in character:

'... If you will let me take you to dine somewhere, I will let you take me to a music hall or theatre afterwards, on Wednesday or any later evening of the week. As I am just back from France and Italy, I am feeling British, and unless you protest I will take you to the Holborn and order the one good dinner which I know how to order there (there is only one): it is very simple and straightforward and distinctly British; so if you don't think you can stand it, say so. I leave you to fix the day, and also the hour.'

Unhappily I cannot remember of what the dinner consisted save that there were oysters. It was a good dinner.

¹ See p. 148.

In October I asked A.E.H. whether I should accede to a request for a review copy. He replied on October 5: 'Don't send a copy of the *Juvenal* to the *Oxford Magazine*. The request merely means that ——— would like to write a second anonymous review.' I suppress the name in the interests of harmony and good feeling—but I have reason to believe that Housman was quite wrong in his view.

And now he was to make one of his infrequent changes of residence. For many years he had been living at Byron Cottage, 17 North Road, Highgate—from 1886 to 1905 according to his own account, but he was not always accurate. He had gone there from 82 Talbot Road, Bayswater, where he had shared rooms with Moses and Adelbert Jackson. Byron Cottage still exists and has been but little altered since Housman lived in it. The photograph, facing this page, of the exterior as it looks on to North Road and Highgate School was taken specially for this book in December, 1938, by Maurice Beck, as was the photograph, facing p. 70, of the front room on the ground floor, the room in which almost certainly *A Shropshire Lad* was first set down on paper. Housman was, as far as I can discover, the only lodger. Byron Cottage is a smallish house without much accommodation; it was then larger. The name is in no way associated with Lord Byron but derives from the fact that it was inhabited by an Edward Byron who in 1756 was elected Governor of Highgate School. In its immediate neighbourhood—in the vault of the old chapel of St. Michael's Church—is the grave of the poet Coleridge, who died at 3 The Grove, the house recently occupied by J. B. Priestley. I cannot find that there is any one now living who can bear certain witness to the very room in which Housman generally worked in Byron Cottage, but I have come as near as seems possible to the truth.

Rothenstein, in the second volume of his *Men and*

Memories, says: 'Housman had formerly lived at Highgate, from which he travelled daily by train to Gower Street. But the story goes that one day some one jumped into the carriage, in which he was and tried to get into conversation with him; upon which he moved to Pinner.' I could have believed it; I had heard the story told, with greater detail, elsewhere. Housman was reported to have been much incensed by what was a quite accidental intrusion on his privacy, and, fearing that, having happened once, it might very well occur again, he lost no time in changing his address and his railway line. But it happens not to be true, the simple fact being that his landlady had made him so comfortable at Highgate that, when she found that she herself had to move, he moved with her. His new address was 1 Yarborough Villas, Woodridings, Pinner, but whether he actually invited any one of his friends either to that or to his previous address, I am doubtful. He wrote to me from Highgate on October 31:

'After our failure to meet last week I am afraid that I forgot, together with many other things, that you wanted to see me: my excuse is the bother and discomfort of a change of house which is now going on. On Thursday after 2 o'clock I can meet you where you like.'

To escape from that discomfort he evidently went on a visit to the country, for on November 14 he writes from Pinner: 'It afflicts me very much that I cannot come to your lunch and meet your attractive company of guests, but have much too bad a cold and cough and reached here only last night.' That lunch was at the old Verrey's; it was to celebrate the start of the new business, and he would have had as fellow guests A. B. Walkley, whom he wanted to meet and who wanted to meet him; Alfred G. Schiff, the stockbroker, to whose kindness and that of his family I owed much; Thomas Seccombe; Filson Young; and others

of eminence in their own spheres. Housman's cold lasted. The next day he writes from University College: 'I have come up to the College to do what is necessary, but I am not fit for company. I am very much annoyed on your account as well as my own'; and he adds: 'My books are in confusion at present, but I will look out a copy of the *Shropshire Lad*.' That copy was wanted for a new setting of type. It came and with it a letter of the same date from Pinner: 'Here is a copy of the first edition; but if you are going to publish a new one, let me see the final proofs. There is no other way to ensure accuracy.'

A letter from Pinner of December 20, 1905, is interesting. John Lane evidently and not unnaturally thought that my difficulties left Housman open to offers:

'John Lane wrote to me about a week ago, asking if I would give him the publication of *A Shropshire Lad* in England and America, or in America only. I replied that I had given the publication in England to E. Grant Richards and that I could not do anything about America without consulting that firm. Then he writes me the enclosed on which I should like to have your views. Please return the letter.

'Thanks for Drummond's *Cypress Grove*, which is new to me. The cover, if you want my opinion, is both ugly and silly; but you probably have a just contempt for my artistic taste and will not allow this remark to embitter your Christmas.'

William Drummond of Hawthornden's *A Cypress Grove* was a reprint, the first of the Venetian Series, a collection of sixpenny books on which I vainly embarked. The cover in question was made of a patterned paper specially brought from Varese. I was proud of it. Housman's taste was not, I thought and think, to be entirely trusted in matters of covers and jackets, and very likely not in matters of art apart from architecture, and so I did not allow his opinion to embitter the festival. I do however remember one en-

tirely justified enthusiasm that he had—for the work of F. L. M. Griggs, R.A., of Campden.

He writes next on January 17, 1906, when he thanks me for sending him an illustration by William Hyde, 'which I think very nice'. This must have been with the idea of interesting him in the possibility of commissioning Hyde to do some topographical illustrations to *A Shropshire Lad*. He had just been reading Filson Young's novel, *The Sands of Pleasure*: 'I have read the Parisian part: it is interesting and well written.' Three days later another letter about the American publication of *A Shropshire Lad*.¹ The persistent Lane, it appears, would not take 'no' for an answer:

'I ought to tell you at once, as it may affect your plans, what I hear from John Lane this morning:—that John Lane Company of New York have informed him that they intend to make plates and reprint *A Shropshire Lad* in America. The history of the matter is this. Lane, as I told you, wrote to me on Dec. 12, asking to be given the publication of the book, or its publication in America, and adding that of course there was nothing to prevent him from reprinting the book there, but that he would not "commit this act of piracy". I replied that I must consult E. Grant Richards, but that if, on second thoughts, he could bring himself to turn pirate, it would inflict no injury on me personally, as I should not in any case accept royalties. John Lane Company say that they regard my kind letter as tantamount to permission to do what they intend to do.

'It may interest my publisher to learn that she has broken all the traditions of the trade by making arrangements with another

¹ Mr. Houston Martin of Philadelphia, at my request, was good enough to make inquiries as to the John Lane editions of *A Shropshire Lad*: 'The first edition to appear in this country was brought out by Lane in 1897, bound in boards and much resembling the Kegan Paul edition. [Naturally, as it was part of that edition and was bound at the same time by the same binders. G.R.] This was priced at \$1.25 and is now very rare. A new edition was issued in 1900 and again in 1901, at, I think, \$1.00 the copy. The last Lane edition was brought out in 1906 at \$1.00 for boards and \$3.00 for morocco.' He adds: 'The Kennerley edition was not published until 1908, at 30 cents for paper covers and \$2.00 for buckram. The Mosher editions appeared *circa* 1910, at \$1 to \$2.50, depending on the binding.'

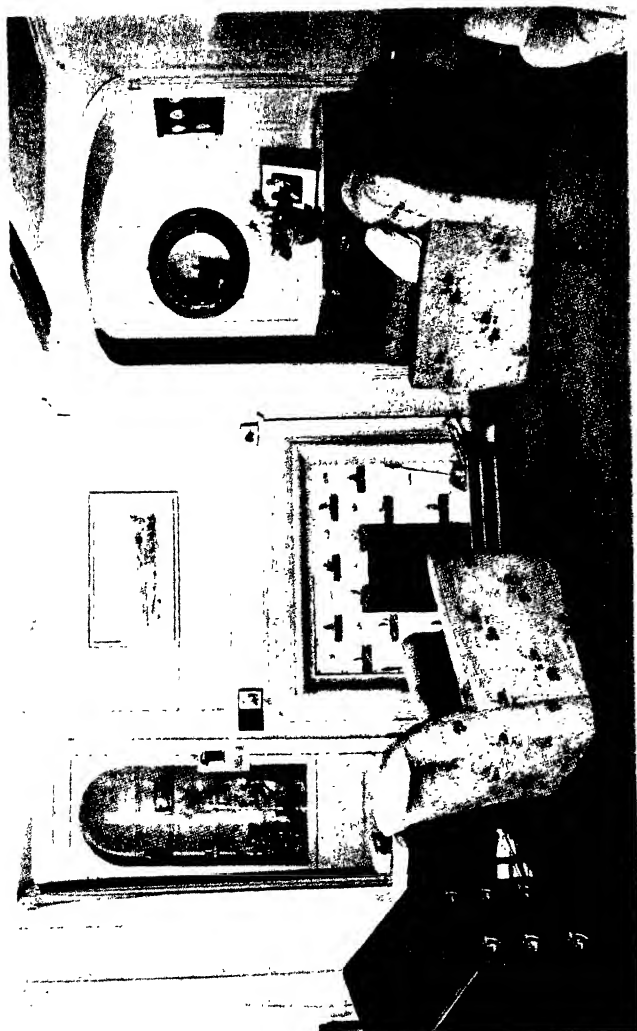
publisher in New York without giving John Lane Company the opportunity of taking the new edition: that company is reluctantly, in self-defence, compelled to issue an edition of its own. There is etiquette, I daresay, even in Pandemonium.'

On January 28, 1906, he sends a postcard to say that if the book is to be published either by McClure, Phillips and Company or by John Lane Company he prefers McClure. After this passage of years it may not be indiscreet to add that he particularly did 'not want to have anything to do with the other worthy'. One wonders why. And I also wonder whether my failure had not rather unsettled my memory as to what did happen before that failure occurred, at least with regard to *A Shropshire Lad*, for I find that I had myself sold some three hundred copies, constituting an edition, of that book to John Lane's American house in 1900. But I have only discovered this fact while this book has been in the printer's hands. And I have also found out through the Kennerley letter quoted in part on p. 25 that Lane had in fact an even better claim to consideration with regard to America, for he had bought in 1897 one hundred and sixty-two copies in sheets,¹ with 'cancel-titles', from Kegan Paul. Those copies came out of the original edition of five hundred: Messrs. Kegan Paul have recently told me this. So the sale in England during the first two years was small indeed!²

From Housman's next letter I will quote only because it shows his single-mindedness. The binders of the first volume of the Manilius were, it appears, attempting to hold the stock of the book after my failure, under some lien. That lien, however, could not be held with any certainty to apply to stock which had never belonged to me. It

¹ Kennerley gave me the figure of Lane's order as two hundred and seventy-five; the number given above is that actually supplied.

² See p. 15. I am borne out in my contention that the book was long in finding its public.



TTAGE, HIGH
re Lad was—almo
graph by Maurice I

seemed necessary to get a legal decision on the matter. Housman wrote that he had no objection to incurring any publicity which might be entailed, but goes on:

'I will neither pay anything nor risk paying anything (because enough copies have been sold to make known what I wanted made known, and my spare money I prefer to spend on producing other works). But when you say that it is of course understood that you pay the bill, I do not see why you should want to pay it and I do not even see what particular advantage you would gain by the rescue of my property.'

In a letter dated February 17, 1905 (although I am sure that the year should be 1906) he writes for some reason to tell me that he is not a member of the Authors' Society (he became one later on); and on March 11, 1906, comes a letter from another side of his mind:

'When I found your letter on the breakfast-table this morning, it reminded me that I had been dreaming about the subject in the night. I suppose that your amiable interest had been acting on me by telepathy. Anyhow I dreamt that I met the friend who introduced me to the wine, and asked him for its name, and he told me, and it was right; but alas, that is just the part of the dream that I have forgotten. It was a longer name than Corvo or Syracuse. . . . I have been looking at the map of Sicily and I think it was *Camastra*.'

And on March 29 a letter thanking me for my 'news about Manilius and for your efforts in the matter, now crowned with success' (for I had overcome the lien difficulty). He continues with a paragraph about the wine of whose name he had not been sure:

'I have ascertained that the name of the wine is *Camastra*, for the other day I was turning out a pocket and came upon the note I had made at the time. It appears that this benighted metropolis, full as it is of execrable Capri, contains none; but mind you order it if you find yourself at the Cavour in Milan.

'I am afraid that there is no chance of my being in Paris, at any rate as early as Easter Tuesday.'

In thanking me for a copy of a new edition of *A Shropshire Lad* on April 7, 1906, he says: 'I suppose it is the edition of 1903 put into a white cover instead of a red, as it seems to have only the few misprints which distinguish that issue. The get-up, to my untutored eye, is nice.'

In the third week of April, 1906, Housman was once more in Paris. By May 7 he is back at Pinner: 'I have just been away at Cambridge for the week-end.' We were to dine together: 'I will look after the dinner if you will see about some dramatic entertainment that does not begin too early. I must warn you that I will *not* go to Nero.' Nero was a Beerbohm Tree production at His Majesty's; Stephen Phillips wrote it. What we did visit I cannot remember, and I have no other letters till June 23, when he sends me his lawyer's 'exciting narrative of the rescue of Manilius' and tells me that he has 'been reading the *Athenaeum*: You seem to me to have the advantage in argument and especially in temper'. This is in reference to an argument that had been going on in the *Athenaeum* between E. V. Lucas and myself, a correspondence of which I am not now proud, although it was rather forced on me. I afterwards reprinted the whole of it in a small pamphlet. Lucas had a legitimate grievance against me as the result of my failure, but this is not the place to rake up that story. Nor is it the place to go into the story of what happened to my business when the late H. A. Moncrieff, the trustee, sold it to Alexander Moring, except to explain the next two letters I am quoting. Both are from Pinner. The first is dated August 17, 1906:

'Alexander Moring Ltd. have written to me asking to be allowed to continue to include *A Shropshire Lad* in *The Smaller Classics*. I have refused and have told them how atrociously you behaved in ever including the book in the series, and how glad I am to have the chance of stopping the scandal.

'I suppose you won't be in Paris between Tuesday and Saturday. I shall be at the Normandy.'

A postscript added the next day says that 'Mr. Balfour Gardiner may publish "The Recruit" with music if he wants to. I always give my consent to all composers in the hope of becoming immortal.'

The second letter is a copy of that sent to Moring :

'Mr. Grant Richards included my book *A Shropshire Lad* in his series of *The Smaller Classics* without consulting me, and to my annoyance. I contented myself with remonstrating, and did not demand its withdrawal; but now that I have the chance, I take it, and I refuse to allow the book to be any longer included in the series. I hope that you will not be very much aggrieved; but I think it unbecoming that the work of a living writer should appear under such a title.'

Of course he was quite right from his point of view! Still I think that a responsible publisher may not improperly claim the right to use the word 'classic' of a book in the future of which he has as great confidence as I had in this case—unless his author disapproves, as Housman did. I note, in passing, that more publishers than one have published the books of living authors in their series of Classics! I myself did it on one other occasion when I included Theodore Watts-Dunton's *Aylwin* in the World's Classics. But I had a reason for doing that: Watts-Dunton undertook to secure for me permission for a Swinburne selection in that series on condition that I would give *Aylwin* a place!

The Lane proposals continued to exercise Housman's mind. On the last day of 1906, he writes that he is 'not anxious to accede to Lane's proposal: quite the reverse'.

On April 17, 1907, he is again in Paris at the Normandy Hotel and I too must have been going to Paris:

'On receiving your letter this morning I have sent you off a telegram, asking you, or rather commanding you (as is the manner of telegrams) to come and dine on Friday or lunch on

Saturday. Perhaps it is impossible for you, however obedient, to get here on Friday; but, if you can, name your own dinner-hour, no matter how late.

'I may be still here on Sunday, but it is uncertain.'
That dinner invitation I did accept. I describe the occasion in a later chapter.¹

On May 7, 1907, back in England, he has been reading John Davidson's *The Triumph of Mammon*:

...
'Wednesday is my best day for lunch, or else Friday.

'The Athenaeum had previously reviewed both the Manilius and the Juvenal some time ago: to the Manilius they gave quite a long review in large print.

'Thanks for the *Triumph of Mammon* which is much more interesting to read than the *Theatrocrat*; but as for his knowledge which is going to change the world, it is just like the doctrine of the Trinity: probably false, and quite unimportant if true. The five lines at the top of p. 17 are the sort of thing he does really well.'²

By May 23 he is again concerned with the way in which *A Shropshire Lad* is being reprinted:

'On pages 1, 8, 13, 24, 46, 72, 73, 83, I have marked for correction, if possible, certain ugly over-running of words from one line to another. Since these over-runnings existed in neither the 1896 nor the 1900 editions, it seems absurd that they should be necessary in this, which has smaller print than the former and a larger page than the latter. Moreover, on general grounds, a person like me, who habitually writes in metres which have short lines, ought not to be deprived by printers of the neatness which it is easy, in such metres, to preserve.

'The further over-runnings which I have marked on pages

¹ See p. 116.

² *The Triumph of Mammon*. By John Davidson. London: Grant Richards. 1907. The five lines in question are:

... or beauty breaks
In blossoms and the sweet sex of the rose
Perfumes the way, or when the crescent moon,
Recut anew in pallid gold, adorns
The saffron sunset, like an odour changed
To purest chrysolite and hung in heaven

68, 82, 101, occurred in one or other of the two other editions, and therefore I do not so much object to them; but I suspect that they are really unnecessary. The over-runings on page 48, on the other hand, may be necessary, as they occurred in the first edition and were only avoided in 1900 by not indenting the lines; but I am disposed to think that non-indentation would be preferable.

‘I feel that I did not earn my lunch the other day by the amount of information I was able to afford.’

During this month I took Housman to see Hugh Lane in the house which he shared with William Orpen at 8 Bolton Gardens South, that Sir Hugh Lane whose bequest to the National Gallery has been the cause of so much argument. Nothing came of the meeting. The acquaintance-ship was not continued. The poet had no particular interest in ‘Mademoiselle Eva Gonzalès’ and the other French pictures which decorated Orpen’s studio; and the collector was not a reader of poetry.

And again during this month I must have definitely suggested to Housman that he should sanction the edition of *A Shropshire Lad* illustrated by William Hyde¹ which had been in my mind. Hyde had already done a series of topographical pictures in monochrome for an edition of George Meredith’s nature poems and was enjoying a certain success. Housman, frankly, although he had liked the Hyde picture I had sent him, did not care for the project, but agreed to its being carried out, rather, I think, with the idea of humouring me than for any other reason. He writes to me on June 4:

‘I enclose, as you asked me, some suggestions for Shropshire views.

‘I have just received some press cuttings from America, from which it appears that in addition to John Lane’s edition there is one by Mosher.² If you have facilities for getting hold of these, I should be rather interested to see them.’

¹ See p. 69.

² See note, p. 69.

On June 12, as I had been able to send him from my own collection the Mosher edition of *A Shropshire Lad*, he writes again. First, however, he dealt with a further cause of vexation:

'I have just noticed a trifling misprint which I think I did not mark in the proofs of the new *Shropshire Lad*. In the poem XXIV, p. [36.]. 1st stanza, 2nd line, the stop after the word "prime" should be a full stop, not a comma.

'I am much obliged for the Mosher edition, which is nicely got up, except for the stupid practice of breaking stanzas in two at the foot of a page. It has misprints too.'

This Mosher was a strange example of American literary enterprise. He did as much as any man to make *A Shropshire Lad* known to his compatriots and, in doing so, in no way vexed its author, who never hid from his American correspondents that his book enjoyed no copyright in the United States. Thomas Bird Mosher, to quote from my own *Author Hunting*, was a 'pirate' publisher

'who, fitly enough, carried on business at Portland, Maine, a state whose coast, indented, according to my atlas, with creeks and rich in islands and rivers, is, apart from its climate, the very place for pirates. He produced charming little books and a periodical *The Bibelot*. Yes, Andrew Lang was not incorrect in calling him a "pirate" in that he made full use of the fact that at the time he greatly flourished the English writer had little or no copyright protection in the United States. But it is difficult to see why the word "pirate" should be used in any opprobrious sense, since all that he did was to avail himself of his legal rights. Besides, much of what Mosher printed was "chosen from scarce editions and from sources not generally known", while at all times he used material that was, according to the law of his country, within the public domain. However, pirate or honest man, Mosher was more or less a scholar and had as high a standard of book production and, apparently, as fine a sense of literary values, as any book-maker or publisher working in the United States in his day.'

Mosher, although very careful about the appearance of his type-page, was as careless of the accuracy of his anthologies. Thus he did in 1914 a singularly attractive book, *Amphora: a Collection of Prose and Verse*. Naturally Housman is represented—with 'On Wenlock Edge'. It has nine misprints: 'Uricorn' instead of 'Uricon', the word 'saplings' with two 'p's' (twice), "t will' instead of 'twill', "T would' instead of "Twould", "T is' instead of "Tis' (twice), "t was' instead of "twas' (twice). So anthologies run. But mine were often as bad.

Going back to the first paragraph of that letter of June 12: certainly it made me ashamed at what seems now, looking back, to have been some great carelessness on my own part or that of the printers. Such things, in my experience, happen too often with the books of which one is most proud and in which one most wishes to prevent errors. Malignant fate! I was as the years rolled on justly to be reproached again and again. It sometimes happened that I would be so determined that no misprints should be found in a new edition that I would go through the proofs word for word, comma for comma. But even then errors would creep in before the sheets came to be machined. Naturally Housman would be annoyed. On this occasion I offered to print an erratum slip; he replied on June 15: 'Oh no, it is not worth while.' Such errors, especially at the ends of lines, are often the result of insufficient care in moving the body of type: a final stop or letter falls away unnoticed. Such an accident occurred on p. 26 of *More Poems*: an 's' having dropped from the end of the fifth line.

On June 29 we come back to Housman's refusal to allow poems from *A Shropshire Lad* to appear in anthologies:

'Pray who gave Mr. E. Thomas leave to print two of my inspired lays in his and your "Pocket Book of Poems and Songs"? I didn't, though he thanks me in the preface. Just

the same thing happened in the case of Lucas's "Open Road", issued by the same nefarious publisher. You must not treat my immortal works as quarries to be used at will by the various hacks whom you may employ to compile anthologies. It is a matter which affects my moral reputation: for six years back I have been refusing to allow the inclusion of my verses in the books of a number of anthologists who, unlike Mr. Thomas, wrote to ask my permission; and I have excused myself by saying that I had an inflexible rule which I could not transgress in one case rather than another.¹ Now these gentlemen, from Quiller-Couch downward, will think I am a liar.

'Mr. Thomas thanks me for "a poem" and prints two: which is the one he doesn't thank me for?

'My temper, as you are well aware, is perfectly angelic, so I remain yours sincerely. . . .'

I have some little difficulty in recalling the circumstances which elicited this remonstrance, and I cannot remember at this length of time how it was that a poem had eight years before appeared in E. V. Lucas's *The Open Road*, to which, after I had excused myself in the Edward Thomas matter, Housman returns in a letter dated July 2:

'Thanks for your letter. What you have got in your head is the fact that I allow composers to set my words to music without any restriction. I never hear the music, so I do not suffer; but that is a very different thing from being included in an anthology with W. E. Henley or Walter de la Mare.

'I did not remonstrate about the "Open Road": I was speechless with surprise and indignation.'

Housman always assumed that I had without authority given Lucas permission to include the poem, given him permission under the impression that as I had become the publisher of the book I could surely without impropriety sanction the use of a single poem in an anthology of which I was also to be the publisher. If it was so, then I had no

¹ Presumably with Housman's authority, I certainly gave Messrs. Routledge permission to print a *Shropshire Lad* poem in E. Pertwee's *Reciter's Treasury of Verse*.

ground to stand on and can only plead that I was new at the game of publishing. But I had in 1907 repeated my offence! The poems in Edward Thomas's collection were 'Reveille' and 'The Merry Guide', and I could not then, and cannot now, make any excuse for, or offer any explanation of, their appearance.

E. V. Lucas was one of Housman's earliest admirers; if he had not been a pupil of Housman's at University College he was at least much aware of his quality (see p. 97), and I can well remember how pleased he was, soon after becoming my adviser, to hear that *A Shropshire Lad* was to be on my list. In an article, 'Unique Books', in the *Sunday Times*, April 26, 1936, he describes a 'miscellany brought from various sources and secured between covers with an embraceive title' that he had made 'for a friend who had gone to the Klondyke in the hope of finding gold'. It was 'of a kind that the reader ought to like to return to and relish again and ever again'. Addressed to the friend, the unique volume failed to arrive. Forty years pass and then the readers of the *Sunday Times* have the opportunity of reading of the incident. 'Thinking it over,' Lucas continued, 'I am saddened by the reflection that very little has been written in the past 40 years that I should want also to include. Old things are best. If I were making another unique book to-day, to send abroad, I can at the moment think of nothing to add but the poems of A. E. Housman.'

And then on the last day of 1907 Housman writes from Pinner to wish me a Happy New Year. 'I am here, and not likely to go away.'

VIII

MANILIUS, COMPOSERS, AND COOKHAM DEAN

ON January 3, 1908, Housman writes to me that he is 'not disposed' to give a Mr. Levy 'the permission he asks for. For several years back I have refused to have my verses printed in *collections*.' Then six weeks elapse without any letters that I can trace. On February 17, 1908, he writes:

'I am told that a young lady whom I have met once or twice in Gloucestershire, and who "wants to take up black and white drawing" (having done water colours hitherto, I think) and who "has lately been studying under Cameron, and he says that her architectural drawings are wonderful", wants an introduction to my publisher. (I rather gather that she is under the deplorable impression that my publisher is Macmillan, but let that pass). As you were talking the other day about some architectural book, I wondered if you would care to see her. She is tall and beautiful, but let that pass too.

'And pray what is the exact process of introducing people to one's publisher? Does one provide them with a letter, which they present at the door of the spider's parlour?'

Unfortunately, I could at the time find no serious work for the lady, but that she merited Sir D. Y. Cameron's and A. E. Housman's interest any one can see for himself if he cares to look at the reproduction in *Author Hunting* of the sepia drawing which she made of my strange little office at 7 Carlton Street, Regent Street. I occupied five or six poky ground and first-floor rooms at the corner of St. Alban's Place, one of the last Nash buildings to be pulled down in that neighbourhood. It was a place to which Alfred Housman often came and it was the fourth home of *A Shropshire Lad*. Visiting American publishers

loved it, although in no room could one swing a cat, even a small cat—which was no doubt the reason for their liking, for most of them inhabited huge floors. The lady's name is in the next letter, of February 20, 1908.

'I showed your picture to our professor of Archeology, who says that it is mostly fanciful, and the rowing arrangements impracticable. Representations of triremes exist at Pompeii and have been reproduced in several books, the best of which is probably Baumeister's *Denkmäler*.

'Thanks for your reply about Miss Frood, for such is her name,¹ and also for Filson Young's new book,² which is pretty.'

Why I should have troubled Housman about triremes I do not know.

On May 16 a further letter of permission:

'Mr. I. B. Gurney (who resides in Gloucester Cathedral along with St. Peter and Almighty God) must not print the words of my poems in full on concert-programmes (a course which I am sure his fellow-lodgers would disapprove of); but he is quite welcome to set them to music, and to have them sung, and to print their titles on programmes when they are sung.

'If you can lunch with me on Wednesday I will come down about 1 o'clock.'

And on May 27 a letter about William Hyde's drawings:

'The fates seem to be against our meeting, but after all I don't know that it is necessary we should meet about Hyde's drawings. I did not know that they were to be in colour, and should have preferred black and white; but the colour has a good effect in the autumnal scene on Wenlock Edge. As to the four I saw, I liked three of them; but the one entitled "On the

¹ Later Miss Hester Frood became Mrs. Gwynne Evans. Housman's informant erred in saying that Mrs. Gwynne Evans had been 'studying under Cameron'. Sir David Cameron had seen her work and some years later was generous in his appreciation of it, but she was in no sense his pupil.

² *The Lover's Hours*. London, 1907.

Teme" had nothing distinctive about it and might have been anywhere: the crescent moon, for instance, is a cosmopolitan embellishment, and I have seen it in France. He might have got a much more striking and characteristic view of the Teme under Whitecliff just opposite Ludlow. But the three views of Clee Hill and Ludlow and Wenlock Edge are quite the sort of thing required.'

The same subject occupies Housman on June 6:

'1. I do not in the least want the crescent moon *removed* from the drawing "On the Teme", as Mr. Hyde seems to think.

'2. I suppose it was you who sent him on his wild goose chase to Hughley. I carefully abstained from suggesting that subject.

'3. A view of the Wrekin from the neighbourhood of Much Wenlock, as he suggests, would do quite well.

'4. I have no objection to his proposal about the frontispiece.

'5. Long years ago I warned Laurence that if ever I wrote a book I would never let him decorate it.'

I had not sent Hyde to Hughley. The reader may see in Laurence Housman's *A.E.H.* (p. 82) Alfred's reason for describing Hyde's choice of it as a 'wild goose chase'. 'The place' Alfred 'really meant had an ugly name, so he substituted Hughley.'

Housman's determination not to allow his brother to decorate his book did not at all follow my own inclination, for I must have suggested that Laurence should design the cover for the pictured *Shropshire Lad*. Indeed whenever in those days I wanted a decorative design for a book or series of books, I turned naturally to the younger brother. For instance he designed the spine decorations for my *World's Classics*,¹ for the Winchester Edition of Jane Austen, and for the Elizabethan Classics. He also designed the monogram which at times I used on catalogues and

¹ The Oxford University Press when they took the series over chose a more sober dress.

title-pages. The simpler monogram which I used later was not his work but that of Sir William Rothenstein.

On June 27 Housman has been reading proofs—of the Hyde edition, I suppose:

‘On the title page the three words *A Shropshire Lad* should be in one line, as in all the editions except the atrocious production of 1904. I have also marked small details on pp. vii and 13. The repetition of p. 3 as p. 11 is one of those sacred mysteries with which I don’t interfere.

‘The corrections apply also to the American edition; but I am retaining the proofs of that unless you want them back.

‘Bywater is resigning the Greek chair at Oxford, and Herbert Richards ought to succeed him. Whether he will, is quite another question. It is a Regius professorship, and the King generally asks the advice of one or two persons whom he supposes to be good judges. He has not applied to me: possibly because we have not been introduced.’

Herbert Richards, the elder of my two uncles, was not offered the Greek chair. Mr. Asquith was, one supposes, responsible for the appointment of Dr. Gilbert Murray. My uncle had been a contemporary of Asquith’s at Balliol and he may well have hoped for the chair, but Gilbert Murray, who had married the daughter of the Earl of Carlisle, a Liberal peer, was much better known to the world outside the Universities. ‘A Wadham man, now deceased’—I quote from a letter of the Rev. John Richards, Herbert’s younger brother—‘told me (I know not on what authority) that Asquith wrote to Herbert admitting Herbert’s great claims but explaining that Gilbert Murray had done so much to popularize the study of Greek, then rather under a cloud’.¹

¹ A gossip in the *Daily Sketch* of May 2, 1936 had a story to tell of Housman and his interest in Greek: ‘I recall his indignation when he was congratulated on his brilliant defence of Greek. “*Defence!*” he exclaimed. “I would as soon think of defending Greek as of defending the honour of my own mother.”’ And, as showing that it was not only as a Latin scholar

We come back to Manilius on July 4, 1908. There had been a question of getting photographs of a manuscript which Housman did not find it convenient to go as far as Madrid to see:

'The manuscript is numbered M 31 in the Biblioteca Nacional at Madrid. It contains Manilius and the *Silvae* of Statius. What I really want is to have photographs of the first 107 pages, on which the Manilius is written. The cheapest process is one called (I think) *rotary-bromine*, in which no negative is used: whether this is practised in Madrid I can't be sure. The sums one is charged for photographs of MSS. vary greatly in different towns and countries: I am prepared to go to £20, though it ought to be less, and in Rome at any rate would be very much less, probably about £5.'

On August 26 he writes briefly that he is 'going abroad on the 30th for about a month, and expects to be in Paris in the third week of September, probably at the Normandy'.

In the beginning of November I send him a copy of the William Hyde *Shropshire Lad*. It had been designed as a

that Housman was venerated, here is a note from Miss Annette M. B. Meakin to *The Times* of May 7, 1936: 'When passing through Berlin in the summer of 1926 I had the privilege of spending an interesting afternoon with the late Professor Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff at his house in Charlottenburg. I remember that we were discussing the various ways of pronouncing Homer, when he suddenly remarked, "Although we Germans know Housman to be a rabid Germanophobe, we, nevertheless, unanimously pronounce him to be the greatest living authority on both Latin and Greek in the English-speaking world. His latest work is above praise". Professor Wilamowitz-Möllendorff was not aware until afterwards that he was addressing these words to an old pupil, and also an old friend, of Professor Housman.' E. H. Blakeney wrote on much the same subject, years before, to the *Sunday Times*, October 4, 1931. It seems that he had in 1930 written to 'that great Hellenist—probably the greatest Greek scholar of the last half century', Professor Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, 'to express a regret that German scholars seemed to be unacquainted, in a large measure, with the work of English scholars'. The Professor replied at length and in the course of his letter said: 'We in Germany are fully aware that Housman is the leading living Latinist: I was speaking of this recently with the Swede Löfstedt, who is also in the first rank.'

gift-book edition and appeared just in time for the Christmas season. But it had little success as a gift-book. The letter in response is dated '8 Nov. 1908' and is from Pinner:

'I do not care for the new edition; but as it was brought out simply to please you and not me, that does not matter. Coloured plates always strike me as vulgar (though I understand they are the fashion at present), and those drawings of Hyde's do not seem to me nearly so good as those in his London book. The end papers, on the other hand, I rather like, though the horses seem to be letting the man do all the ploughing. It lies, I find, on drawing-room tables, so all is well.

'To the fate of the widows and orphans whom it appears that you have been introducing to outside brokers I am totally indifferent, having no spirit in my body.'

The last paragraph refers to the fact that the *Academy*, through, I believe, the pen of T. W. H. Crosland, had just then attacked me for allowing (for payment) a book-mark advertising the business of an outside broker to be placed for a while in the books I published. *A Shropshire Lad* may have been among them. I was not very much to blame. All I knew about the business in question was that I had seen it widely advertised in the most respectable quarters, that its name did not suggest, to my untutored mind, that of an outside broker, that in consequence I did not know that outside brokering had anything to do with it, that it occupied respectable premises in Waterloo Place, and that the one member of the firm with whom I dealt, when the thing was suggested to me, was a very reasonable old gentleman who had introduced himself to me as a poet—and indeed he did write verses and had had them published.

In effect that letter of November 8 was the last of that year of which I have record. 'No, I never go abroad in the winter; and also I am going on a visit in Surrey,' he writes

to me on January 7, 1909. Eight days later he is at Pinner, and writes on the 15th:

'Miss or Mrs. Jewell may be told that she can set and publish to her heart's content. If you like to add that she displays an honourable scrupulousness which is doubly remarkable inasmuch as it makes its appearance in a woman and an American; or if you like to quote the opinion of a doctor which I see in to-day's paper, that there are more people with unbalanced minds in Boston than anywhere else, do so: but don't say that I put you up to it.

'Will you dine with me at the Café Royal on Friday Feb. 5th at 7.45? I am also asking Rothenstein.'

That letter ends with a postscript: 'I will remember about The Cheshire Cheese'; and we must have gone soon afterwards to Fleet Street to lunch or dine together, for it is clearly the beef-steak, lark, kidney and oyster pudding of the Cheshire Cheese to which the last sentence of his next letter, written at Pinner on January 23, refers:

'I have received your noble present of Montaigne, and I only wish the rest of my library were fit to keep it company. I have never read him yet in Florio's translation: as a boy I used to study Cotton's, which is good, but less good, I suppose. Thank you also for the guide to Paris. The question whether I ever go to Vienna depends on the question whether you produce a similar guide to it.

'The pudding was not only palatable but digestible.'

The Montaigne in question is a nobly planned edition which the Ballantyne Press printed for me in emulation of the Tudor Translations for which David Nutt and T. & A. Constable were responsible and of which the Montaigne had long been out of print. It initiated the Elizabethan Classics, and had an introduction by Thomas Seccombe; the decoration on the spine was, as I have said, the work of Laurence Housman. The guide to Paris was also intended to initiate a series: 'The Waistcoat Pocket

Guides', the invention of Leonard Williams. It really did fit into the waistcoat pocket, and would have been followed by a Brussels, a Berlin, a Rome and a Vienna if its author had not vanished from my ken. Housman never did visit Austria.

On May 12 I am told on a postcard that 'Manilius Book II may perhaps be ready next year'.

On July 6 he writes to thank me for another book:

'I am very much indebted to you for sending me Royall Tyler's *Spain*,¹ which is a capital straightforward business-like book, exactly the sort of thing I like and find *exciting*. How the public will bear the absence of the usual twaddle I don't know.

'My only objection is to the title, as I think *Spain* is a neuter noun.

and two days later for yet another, a novel by Ernest Oldmeadow:

'I must thank you for *Antonio*, though I have no time at present to do more than glance at it, and also for your cheque, of which I send no formal receipt, because you told me last year it was unnecessary.'

Then, on August 17, one more applicant has to be given permission to publish settings of the *Shropshire Lad*, but this time he 'must be told that this permission conveys no exclusive rights of any kind'. Somebody must have been warning Housman of the possibility that one or other of the composers to whom the poet so readily granted permission might be under the impression that he was the only one so favoured. Such an impression would, of course, have been entirely erroneous—and anyhow the composers who had by then set the poems to music must have amounted to scores!²

¹ *Spain: A Study of Her Life and Arts*. London, 1909.

² Writing in the *Evening Standard* of June 17, 1938, a critic of music, Mr. Stephen Williams, says of a programme of English songs given by Mr. Ailwyn Best: 'It is intellectually interesting because his middle group is a series of "Shropshire Lad" lyrics set by Ivor Gurney, Vaughan Williams, John

On August 24 Housman writes: 'I shall be very pleased to dine with you on Thursday, if you are not dead of ptomaine poisoning, in which case please appear as a ghost and cancel the engagement.' I have no idea why the possibility of poisoning entered his head.

My next letter refers to a sitting for his portrait which I had arranged that he should give to Henry Lamb. They first met at my house in Roland Gardens. I was so great an admirer of Lamb's drawings that I had conceived the idea of his doing for me a series of the men for whom I published and with whom I had any personal friendship. He did a Masfield and a Belfort Bax. Lamb has said that I was his first patron. Here is Housman's letter, written, on October 8, after a dinner-party at my house:

'I have noted the day and hour at which I am to go and have my teeth taken out by Lamb, but I find that I have not got his address.

'I like Masfield very much.¹ Who was the other young man, who reads Manilius?'

John Masfield was one of the guests; 'the other young man' was Eric Maclagan—now Sir Eric—of the Victoria and Albert Museum. I had brought from Paris some very old Marc, but it was not greatly appreciated except by Housman and Maclagan.

Ireland, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell. Housman did a tremendous service to English composers when he wrote those wayward, passionate, disturbing lyrics. . . . I am tempted to think that the Housman lyrics, except for Vaughan Williams's "On Wenlock Edge", are more effective when sung by a baritone. The darker voice suits the dark melancholy of the verses.² I note that the name of Gerald Graham Peel does not appear in this short list of some of the composers who helped themselves to fame and popularity and *A Shropshire Lad* to circulation on the beauty of those lyrics. Butterworth was killed on the Somme in 1916.

¹ Masfield contributed a note to Cyril Clemens's Housman Memorial Number of *Mark Twain Quarterly* (St. Louis, Missouri: 1936) in which he says that he 'first met' Housman 'many years ago, over thirty years I think. . . . I had a very great admiration for his poems.' That dinner of mine, evidently, was the occasion.

The Lamb sitting did not at the time seem to have been much of a success, for Housman writes again on October 16, eight days later:

'I can sit to Lamb again next Thursday at the same hour, if that will suit him. Why was I ever born? This question is addressed to the universe, not to you personally.'

What happened to the resultant drawing I do not know. Housman, as I remember, did not care very much for it. I have a hope that it may one day turn up. That the sitter did not like it says nothing in this case, for he never seemed to care for any of his portraits, having rather the attitude of a schoolboy who has been dragged off unwillingly to the photographer and who is not going to be pleased with the finished work whatever it may look like. An interesting example of this attitude occurs in the case of Sir William Rothenstein. Rothenstein was a friend of Housman's and made several portrait drawings, but this did not prevent Alfred writing to Sir James Barrie on February 20, 1928:

'I hear you are coy to Rothenstein. I also do not want to sit (the more so because I have suffered enough from his pencil for one lifetime), and if you will stand firm, so will I. . . .

'Though Rothenstein cannot draw a likeness, he has a pretty wit, and told Shaw that the secret of his health at his age must be that he has been able to extract ultra-violet rays from lime-light.'

As for Rothenstein not being able to draw a likeness, well, among other contradictions of that notion is a letter written to him by Sir Edmund Gosse in which Gosse describes a portrait of Housman drawn by Rothenstein as 'superlatively good'.

Henry Lamb did two portraits. That one which is lost he handed to me; the second he kept. Neither drawing figures in A. S. F. Gow's list of portraits in *A. E. Housman*

(p. 58). It is likely that they are the result of the first commission Lamb received.

On occasion A.E.H. could be both bitter and wayward. Thus on November 11, 1909:

“The terms” on which Mr. Lambert may print my words with his music are that he should spell my name right.

‘As to Mr. Vaughan Williams,¹ about whom your secretary wrote: he came to see me, and made representations and entreaties, so that I said he might print the verses he wanted on his programme. I mention this lest his action should come to your ears and cause you to set the police after him.’

Follows a letter of November 27, 1909:

‘Well, I will go to Lamb next Thursday if he likes, and I have written to tell him so: I have addressed the letter to 8 Fitzroy Street, though I am not quite sure if that is the number: if not, let me know.

‘I hope you will relate this incident to Mrs. Richards, in order that she may see what a false notion of my temper she has, and how angelic it really is.

‘I met your uncle² in Oxford yesterday, and returning here I find his last book, for which I am much obliged to the author or publisher, whichever is the donor. . . .’

On February 11, 1910, he writes that he will be ‘very glad to come on the 27th, or, as you suggest, on the night of the 26th. Only don’t ask your friend Crosland to meet me’. I did not. I had no thought of doing so. I do not

¹ It is interesting to note in connexion with this mention of Vaughan Williams and with the open manner in which Housman granted permission right and left, that Mr. Ernest A. Knight, of East Budleigh, writing to *The Times* of May 9, 1936, goes so far as to say: ‘As you so truly state in your to-day’s issue, “Housman’s poems hold in simple, imperishable form the simple, imperishable feelings of humanity”. It might be well then at this juncture to remember another poet, a poet of music, Vaughan Williams. His settings to Housman’s “Shropshire Lad” have done more than anything else to make his poetry known to thousands of wireless listeners and to all lovers of English poetry and music. Can anyone forget the haunting poignancy of Williams’s interpretation of “Summer time on Bredon”? I think not.’ See p. 221.

² Herbert Richards.

know whether Housman ever read much of T. W. H. Crosland's work, but he certainly thought poorly of him as a man. On the whole, I think he under-estimated the writer. My own connexion with Crosland, whether as a man or as a writer, had ceased years before.

Four days later, on February 15, he tells me when to expect him and gives me information about Italy:

'As you are so good, I could come down on the 26th by the 5.50 from Paddington (I am writing with only a rather obsolete Bradshaw at hand), and I should be very glad to stay till the Monday morning. Let me know the name of your house,¹ unless your own celebrity in the neighbourhood is sufficient.

'In Venice I almost always go to the Europa, which has absolutely the best possible situation and is not too large. In dignity, according to my gondolier, it ranks next to Danieli's, where the food and drink are better, but which is noisy, and not central enough, and dearer. A cheaper hotel, which I hear well spoken of, is the Luna, close to the royal palace; I have been inside it, and it struck me as well managed.

'The best restaurant to my thinking is the Vapore, and my gondolier tells me that all foreigners say the same. From the Piazza you go under the clock and along the Merceria till you come to a high bridge over a canal: there, instead of crossing it, you turn sharp to the left. Much greater simplicity is to be had at either of the two Giorgiones, one near San Silvestro and one near the Santi Apostoli; but the food is not very appetising, except the *Baccalà pizzicato* (salt cod mashed up with milk and pepper) which they have on Fridays.

At Milan I always stay at the Cavour, which I believe is really the best hotel, and certainly the most pleasantly situated. It is rather far from the cathedral, but fairly near to the picture gallery. The Hotel de la Ville, in the centre of the city, is, according to Horatio Brown, the best in Italy, but Ashburner² dislikes it: you have met them both, so you can choose which

¹ Since Housman's last visit I had gone to live at Bigfrith, Cookham Dean.

² Walter Ashburner (1864-1936), late Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford and Fellow of Merton. Born at Boston, U.S.A., he was educated at University College, London, and at Balliol. He lived in Florence.

to believe. The Cavour is not cheap, but nothing outrageous. The restaurants of Milan I know nothing about: I suppose I have been in one or two, but if so I have forgotten them.'

I cannot forbear quoting his 'bread and butter' letter:

'We were prematurely separated at Praed Street and I could not take a proper farewell of you, so I must write to say how much I enjoyed myself, and to congratulate you on the combined excellences of your neighbourhood, your house, and your family.'

That February visit was to destroy in my mind, once and for all, the idea that Housman did not like children, had no interest in them, no sympathy with them. I had prepared carefully for his coming, and my children's nurse had strong injunctions to keep them out of my august guest's sight and their noise from his ears. And this was actually achieved until some hour on the Sunday morning. We had been, Housman and I, for a walk from Cookham Dean, down through the orchards to Cookham and by the ferry to the tow-path below Cliveden. It was a damp, mist-laden morning and cold, and we came back weary and ready for lunch. But, alas! (as I thought) as we walked up through the garden there was a whoop of angry defiance and one of my infants, laden with a sword and wearing a paper cap to show that he was a Red Indian, dashed into view round a corner of the house. He was pursued by three other young ruffians. Having been warned that they were neither to be seen nor heard by the visitor and being really very obedient children, they pulled themselves up in confusion at the sight of the ogre whom they supposed him to be. But he proved by no means an ogre! He was friendly; he talked to them; he adapted himself for a few minutes to the high spirits which we had so suddenly interrupted; he took pains to learn their names. He won their hearts and thereafter in all his visits would wish to

see them; and he continued to interest himself in their progress. In their turn, they came to look forward to his next arrival, making it a joke against me that I had warned them that the author who was coming to see me did not like children and would not put up with them, and that, having been so good and so quiet till the accident happened, they had found that he was as 'nice' as any of my other friends.

During that spring Housman was concerned at his inability to procure photographs of the Manilius manuscript at Madrid, of which I have already written. The efforts then made had come to nothing. The photographs, in the Spanish manner, were always coming; they never came. Then Eric Maclagan, who, as we have seen, had read Manilius, offered his assistance. Housman makes reference to this on April 12:

'Whatever the result may be, I am very much obliged both to Maclagan and you for your warfare against the Spanish character.

'I also have to thank you for Masefield's two novels, of which I have read *Captain Margaret*. Quite readable, and containing a number of interesting details; but bad.'

On June 4, invited to Cookham Dean, he writes that he is engaged and cannot come: 'I have telegraphed, which I don't know whether I ought to have done, as I daresay you are charged a lot for delivery.' He did come for the week-end a fortnight later. And it was during that week-end that I discovered that he was not only one who appreciated good food but was also himself a zealous and accomplished artist in that kind, for he made excellent salads. It was a Sunday and we had walked from Cookham Dean to Sonning, mainly by the tow-path, and there on the terrace of the White Hart's dining-room, he had taken the ingredients from the waiter and had achieved a remark-

able result. I have known many men who prided themselves on their ability to make a good salad, but Housman was the most able. And he was not fussy about it. Thereafter he always made the salads in my house.

On July 15 he writes about Manilius:

'I have received the photographs, which are quite satisfactory, and I am very grateful to you as well as to Maclagan and his *hidalgo*, for I should never have got them without your assistance.¹

'Also I must thank you for Masfield's plays, which are well worth reading and contain a lot that is very good; only he has got the Elizabethan notion that in order to have tragedy you must have villains, and villains of disgusting wickedness or vileness.'

And he writes also to Maclagan from Pinner on July 15:

'Dear Mr. Maclagan,

I have received and examined the photographs, and find them complete and quite satisfactorily clear; and I assure you that it is a great comfort to possess them, and that as I shall constantly be using them I shall constantly be feeling gratitude to you for your trouble and your success. I must also thank you for the rather surprisingly low price at which you have managed to secure them.

'I will write as you suggest to Dr. G. de Osma. I enclose cheque for £2. 15. 0, and am yours sincerely and gratefully
A. E. Housman.'

The summer passes without my seeing him again, for on September 5 he writes from the Normandy Hotel in Paris that he is going home on Wednesday, 'so we have accurately timed our visits so as to miss one another, which

¹ In answer to my inquiry Maclagan writes (on January 31, 1937): 'I remember very well getting Housman, thro' Don Guillermo de Osma, the photostat reproductions he needed of the Madrid MS. of Manilius; and our two names stand immortalized together, yours and mine, in one of the Latin prefaces [*Manilius* II]. He had been trying in vain to get replies to his letters to the Madrid library, and as I was going to Madrid he asked me to do what I could; and I quite unexpectedly succeeded. This was at Easter, or just after; I suppose in 1910.'

is annoying, but cannot be helped. The first thing I was told of when I got here was the recent departure of my friend M. Gran' Reesharr'.'

On October 19 he tells me, once more and unnecessarily, that I am 'right in assuming' that he objects to the 'printing of my poems in concert programmes'.

On November 15 I am to tell Mr. Hemsley that he 'may print the verses he wants in his Latin book'; and 'As to the Manilius, tell the enquirer that you have no information. I have just been lunching with Frank Harris, who came down on me at the College like a wolf on the fold'.

That visit of Frank Harris's cannot have been very comfortable. Housman did not care to talk of it. He had much the same opinion of Frank Harris as he had of T. W. H. Crosland.

IX

PROFESSORSHIP AT CAMBRIDGE

H OUSMAN'S satisfaction with me as his publisher was due, no doubt, not to any special ability on my part but to the fact that I had been fortunate enough, the time being propitious, to make two blades of interest grow where but one had grown before, and had, in one way or another, managed to sell his book so much more rapidly than Kegan Paul had done. It must have been more than a little annoying, even to the most austere poet, to find that having achieved publication, though at his own expense, and after having been praised in competent quarters as a poet who had added no mean sheaf to the harvest of English song—it must have been galling to find that very few people liked his book well enough to buy it for themselves or for their friends. He never once, much as he desired a huge sale, reproached me for not selling more copies than I did. He appeared content, and he even went to the length of recommending me as a publisher to his friends. Such a one was his colleague in London, Arthur Platt, the Professor of Greek at University College. Platt went from Harrow to Cambridge where he won a scholarship at Trinity College. In spite of the fact that Housman sent him to me that I might publish his *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus* in 1911, I should have little to say of him here were it not that in the preface that Housman wrote for Platt's *Nine Essays*¹ occurs a passage which the reader should bear in mind. Housman notes that 'in the first part of the

¹ Cambridge University Press, 1927. Dr. F. W. Pember, Warden of All Souls, Oxford, rescued a fragment of Housman's humorous verse in a letter to *The Times* of November 9, 1936, a fragment that he had from W. P. Ker:

'... Housman and Platt infused "a certain liveliness" into the serious pages of the *Journal of Philology* by tilting at each other in jesting, but friendly,

Classical Tripos of 1882 Platt was placed in the second division of the first class, a position which may have disappointed himself but did not surprise those friends who, whenever they went into his rooms, had found him deep in books which had no bearing on the examination'. The last thirteen words might well be a description of Housman's own case. The whole Preface is characteristic Housman.

On January 17, 1911, Housman asks me to dine with him on February 3 at the Café Royal: 'I am asking Platt, whom you have already met under other circumstances.' Apparently I was engaged for that day, and with my regrets I must have joined my congratulations on his having just been appointed to the Kennedy Professorship of Latin at Cambridge. He writes again on January 20, 1911:

'Many thanks for your congratulations. Then, as to the dinner, Platt is an easy-going character and will not mind having the date shifted if you cannot come on the 3rd. Next week will be quite time enough to let me know. Thirdly, I am afraid there is no safe immediate prospect of my finding my way to your French cook, as next Sunday I lunch in town, and expect to be at Godalming on the next after that. Thank you all the same.'

It must, I think, be judged a fortunate circumstance that Housman did achieve that Chair. I remember well that fashion. In reference to these sparrings Housman made these two lines, which deserve not to be forgotten:

Philology was tame, and dull, and flat,
God said "Let there be larks", and there was Platt!

And there appeared in *Punch* of August 14, 1929, a review of H. Hale Bellot's *University College, London, 1826-1926* which one would almost be safe in betting was from E. V. Lucas's pen:

'That a book with such a title should dismiss W. P. Ker, A. E. Housman and J. A. Platt in this sentence: "In Ker, Housman and Platt the College had a trio not exceeded by any group in its history, in reputation or in its affections" is a kind of treachery, or would be so if the scheme of the work allowed for a more human treatment.'

when it became vacant I asked Herbert Richards if Housman had any chance of election. 'None whatever,' was the reply; 'more's the pity. He's the man for the place, of course, but he's been too rude to the men he didn't like. Robinson Ellis,¹ for one, would surely vote against him. He has been very rude to Ellis.' All the same, I have reason to believe that the Oxford professor of Latin, whom I knew well, swallowed his resentment and put scholarship before wounded pride, for, accompanied by his umbrella, he undertook that dull journey from one university to another and registered a vote that must have been on the right side. It was, I have been assured on very good authority, a benevolent intrigue of Henry Jackson, Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, Fellow of Trinity and, later, Vice-Master, that ensured Housman's going to Cambridge. He had long had an eye on Housman as a man whom Cambridge would do well to secure as a fitting successor to H. A. J. Munro and J. E. B. Mayor, the previous occupants of the Kennedy Chair, and he set to work to make it reasonably certain that his wish should be gratified and that the requisite number of votes should be secured. There were other candidates, J. E. Sandys, who was Public Orator (an office that Housman was himself to refuse in 1919), J. P. Postgate and J. S. Reid among them.

When, shortly afterwards, I asked Housman whether he was glad to be leaving London for Cambridge he

¹ Robinson Ellis was very eccentric. He even consulted me, a youth of eighteen, as to whether he should get married or not, and that at a time when he was clearly sinking into his grave. Professor Sayce told a good story of Ellis in his reminiscences. One night Ellis was to dine with Mrs. H. T. Wharton (the wife of *Sappho* Wharton) at Oxford. He seemed to be very late in arriving, and it was a party. At length came a letter by hand: 'Dear Mrs. Wharton: Please excuse my coming to you this evening. I am not feeling very well, and your dinners always give me indigestion.' Housman was not like that. He was punctuality itself. But I can imagine his refusing a second invitation to a dinner-party at a house where the food was really bad.

paused for a moment before replying: 'I am mostly satisfied because at Trinity, of which college I shall be a fellow, I shall, I hope, be a member of the Wine and the Garden Committees.' I believe that he regretted leaving his rooms at Pinner and his landlady. Platt told me that on the one occasion that he himself had been to Pinner, Housman's landlady had said to him that, sorry though she was to be losing her lodger, she could not entirely regret his going, for at Cambridge he would have, she understood, to live in a college and would have other men's society forced upon him. He would be taken out of himself, shaken up, made to chatter like the rest of the world. . . . There was, Platt thought, more than a little truth in what she said.

That the author of *A Shropshire Lad* had been appointed to the Latin Professorship was naturally the subject of comment in such newspapers as had learning and had heard of that book of poems. Indeed one London daily newspaper wished to send a 'Cambridge graduate' to interview Housman. Not finding him, the paper applied to me for his address, and I, suspecting, and being sure that nothing would annoy Housman more, refused to give it. I allowed myself to be inquisitive and, on being told why it was wanted, I promised to refer the matter to the new Professor but held out no hope that he would approve. I was right. A laconic telegram, handed in at Hatch End and dated January 19, 1911, arrived: 'No certainly not, Housman.'

The *Oxford Magazine* of January 26, 1911, was sensible, generous and amusing about the appointment:

'That electors to Professorships *never* elect the best man is a truth which all the best men (i.e. all the candidates save the Professor, in his blindness) clearly recognize. And that the best man is *sometimes* not elected even disinterested persons are often driven to allow. Fear and Favour, ancient and discreditable

powers, sometimes dominate the academic mind, and things go wrong. But nothing went wrong at Cambridge last week, when the Electors to the Chair of Latin elected Mr. A. E. Housman. Mr. Housman is the greatest living critic of Latin poetry; and it is fitting that such a man should fill the Chair of Munro. That an Oxford man should go to a Cambridge Professorship is an uncommon event. Yet we in Oxford have perhaps not over-much cause for self-felicitation. If we bred a great man, yet it took us a long time to find it out. We have as little reason to be proud of ourselves as had the seven cities which contended for the birth of Homer. Perhaps, indeed, Mr. Housman did not always give us a fair chance. His mordant wit sometimes played among us to wound: and we may be forgiven if we sometimes forgot that behind his unmeasured speech there was also unmeasured learning, and behind the learning—genius. We have heard it said by many persons during the last week that Cambridge has done an adventurous thing. That is a shallow judgement. Cambridge has invested in genius; and that, after all, is of all investments the safest. We wish Mr. Housman luck; and we trust that he will still sometimes be seen among us. We wonder what it is, or was, in St. John's College that sends to Professorships men like Mr. Gilbert Murray and Mr. Housman. A banquet seems clearly indicated, with much Samian wine and Ludlow beer—a banquet to which we trust that a generous Foundation will invite both the Editor of the *Magazine* and the writer of this note.'

It was, later on, an unregenerate Housman who, asked his opinion of his new university, replied that he 'found Cambridge an asylum in more senses than one'.

Housman did not move to Cambridge at once, although he stayed for a few days in the interval at 32 Panton Street in that city. He did not take up residence at Trinity until the October term. In the meantime he was variously occupied. He writes on March 7, 1911, from Pinner:

'The Wolsey Hall people do not know what they are talking about: my Juvenal would be no use to students whatever. The proper Juvenal for English students is Duff's, Cambridge Press.

'When Blackwell says "Eriphyle" he means the Fragment of

a Greek Tragedy which appeared in Cornhill about ten years ago.'

The second paragraph is his explanation of an inquiry that B. H. Blackwell, that expert Oxford bookseller, had sent me.

On April 27 he says simply that 'Mr. Butterworth may have permission', and announces that he himself is going to Paris on May 11 with the intention of returning on the 16th. Then on August 15:

'This is rather a miscellaneous letter.

'1. The Second book of Manilius is nearly finished and a large portion of it will be ready for the printers by the end of this month, so I want them to start upon it while I am abroad in September. It had better be published on the same arrangement as the First, if you have no objection.

'2. I expect to be in Paris in the first week of September and again in the third: about the 24th I shall take up my abode permanently in Cambridge, of which I will send you due notice when the time comes.

'3. Can you tell me anything definite of the Hotel de Crillon as to expense? e.g. whether one would get a bedroom and bathroom for 20 francs or so. I shall most likely go either there or to the Continental.'

In my experience it was seldom that Housman asked beforehand about the cost of a room or the cost of anything of the kind.

On August 17 he gives me permission to make an announcement of the Manilius in the *Athenaeum* 'if you will let me see it first', adding that in the 'arrangement' as to the actual making of the book he would prefer to deal with the printers through me 'as they will pay you more attention than me'; he also thanks me for information about the Crillon. He actually went to the Continental. On August 20, a postcard:

'Yes, I received the *Gourmet's Guide*,¹ for which of course

¹ Lieut.-Col. N. Newnham-Davis's *The Gourmet's Guide to Europe*, of

I ought to have thanked you before, as also for several other books of yours; but the fact is you spoil me.'

On August 28:

'1. I have just despatched to you by Parcel Post the text and notes of the Manilius. If you will be good enough to acknowledge receipt of them, I can go abroad with a mind at ease.

'2. This second book is to be printed in just the same form as the first, of which the printers had better have a copy to guide them.

'3. It will be convenient to me if at first, in slip, the text and notes are printed separately, not together as on the former occasion.

'4. The typewritten text contains the letters:

J (cap) j (l.c.) v (l.c.)

These are everywhere to be changed to

I i u

The compositor's simplest way to avoid error will be to put lids on the receptacles containing the types of the forbidden forms, so that his hand cannot get into them; but no doubt he is too proud to take advice from me.

'5. As to errors of the press and corrections. On former occasions the proofs have come to me full of the usual blunders,—numerals wrong, letters upside-down, stops missing, and so on. I have then, at the cost of much labour, removed all these errors. Then, when the last proof has left my hands, the corrector for the press has been turned on to it, and has found nothing to correct; whereupon, for fear his employers should think he is not earning his pay, he has set to work meddling with what I have written,—altering my English spelling into Webster's American spelling, my use of capitals into his own misuse of capitals, my scientific punctuation into the punctuation he learnt from his grandmother. What ought to be done is the reverse of this. The errors which are introduced by the printer should be removed by the press corrector, who will do it more easily and rapidly, though not more efficiently, than I; then and not till then the proofs should come to me, and after that no corrections should be made except by me.

which I published the third edition in 1911. Its author was 'The Dwarf of Blood' of the *Sporting Times*, commonly known as the 'Pink'Un'.

'P.S. Because my hand is particularly good and clear, printers misread it wherever they can; but there is only one letter which they can misread, and that is the letter r. At the end of a word they pretend they think it is s, and in other positions they pretend they think it is v. If they would just notice how I write it, and not expect to find *ʀ* it would save trouble.'

Two days later he is exercised at my suggestion that X should print the book rather than Y, who had printed the first. My reason was purely one of my own convenience. Y had lost money by my failure and I had some hesitation in asking them to do another book for me. A.E.H. writes from Pinner:

'It is a *sine qua non* that Book II of the Manilius should be identical with Book I in type, arrangement, paper, and get-up generally. If this can be secured, I have no *decisive* objection to changing the printers.

'But still I should prefer Y, unless you have some decided reason on the other side. They are more accurate than X or any one who has ever printed the — Review; and when the Juvenal was finished they wrote to me to say that they hoped I would employ them for any similar work in future: though I don't suppose this was due to any sentimental affection for me. Moreover I am a conservative, and do not like changing anything without due reason, not even a printer,—nay, even a publisher.

'Your Athenaeum notice is quite chaste in style. I have put in a word or two.

'I am off to Paris to-morrow, and shall be at the Continental for a week. Any letter after that had better be addressed here.'

On September 22, 1911, a postcard from Hatch End:

'I don't know if you have given my old address to the printers; but if so, please tell them also of the change.

Mr. A. E. HOUSMAN

has moved to

TRINITY COLLEGE

CAMBRIDGE'

On October 1 a letter from Cambridge:

'The account for Manilius I is not where I thought it was, and to look for it through my heaps of old bills and letters would take more time than I can spare; so unless I come across it by accident I cannot send it you. But I find from my bank book that I paid you a cheque for £83 9. 0. and a month later another for £3. 1. 0. which I suppose was for binding. I have told you already that I think this second book must cost more. The Juvenal, including binding, of 200 copies, was £69. 7. 0; but that is irrelevant.

'I am horrified at your bringing back a Tauchnitz and sending it to a respectable person like me. I gave it to you because otherwise I should have left it in France.

'There is a lovely portrait of my disreputable relatives in yesterday's Standard.'

The 'lovely portrait' was of Laurence and Clemence Housman in connexion with their feminist activities, with which Alfred had no sympathy.

On October 5:

'Thanks for your cheerful information about the price of the Manilius; but we don't know what the author's corrections will run to.'

On October 18:

'I am grateful for the cuttings you send me and for your note about Filson Young, and also to him; but it is too soon at present, as I shall not have spare money for indulging my passions in that direction for some time to come.

'I should like to know when you are going to America, and for how long, on account of the Manilius. The printing seems very creditably correct, but I have little time to revise the proofs just at present; and in any case I mean to revise the *notes en masse*, and not piece-meal as the instalments come.'

For some time Housman had been talking of setting up a car of his own, but since that, to be useful, would also have necessitated the hiring or setting up of a chauffeur, the project came to nothing. Filson Young, just then, was an

authority on motoring, and had volunteered, through me, to take Housman over the Olympia show and to see that he had the opportunity of examining those cars which would be most suitable. Housman, when he came to see me in Berkshire, would often take a car from Cambridge for the journey, and he seemed when touring in France always to travel by car rather than by train.¹

On October 24 he sends 'the whole text of Manilius II corrected. The notes will occupy me longer'; and on November 9 he writes very briefly: 'I have been very agreeably surprised by the accuracy of Messrs. X's printing'.

He writes on November 21:

'The composer Butterworth is said to say that he has your express permission to print my words on concert programmes. What is the truth of the matter?

'I know you are in America and shall not expect an answer till you return.'

In my absence Mr. Butterworth was, I am glad to say, convinced that his memory was in fault. He had failed, I take it, to distinguish between permission to set to music and permission to print in concert programmes.

On November 25, 1911, Housman paid the visit to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt which Blunt described in *My Diaries*:

'25th Nov. [1911]. Newbuildings [Place, Sussex]. The recent attacks on me and my book are causing it to sell well, and we are printing an extra 200 copies. Meynell arrived for the week end with Housman, author of "The Shropshire Lad", and we had a poetical evening, Meynell reading us "Modern Love" with a running commentary, an excellent entertainment, as good as the best of lectures.

'26th Nov. (Sunday). I took Housman for a walk and asked him how he had come to write his early verses and whether there was any episode in his life which suggested their gruesome

¹ 'My chief trouble', he wrote to his sister Mrs. Symons on October 3, 1920, 'is that what I now want is no longer a motor and a chauffeur but an aeroplane and a safe pilot, which I suppose are more expensive.'

character, but he assured me it was not so. He had lived as a boy in Worcestershire, not in Shropshire, though within sight of the Shropshire hills, and there was nothing gruesome to record. He shows no trace now of anything romantic, being a typical Cambridge Don, prim in his manner, silent and rather shy, conventional in dress and manner, learned, accurate, and well-informed. He is professor there of Latin, talking fairly well, but not brilliantly or with any originality, depressed in tone, and difficult to rouse to any strong expression of opinion. Nevertheless, I like him, and with Meynell's help we got him to discuss his own poems, though he refused absolutely to read them out. He read instead one of mine, in response to my having read one of his, the one I like best, "Is My Team Ploughing?" I have a great admiration for his "Shropshire Lad", on account of its ballad qualities and the wonderful certainty in his choice of exactly the right word. We had much pleasant talk all day, and sat up again till twelve at night telling ghost stories. He takes an interest in these. Housman's personal appearance is one of depression and indifferent health. He does not smoke, drinks little, and would, I think, be quite silent if he were allowed to be.¹

On December 10 Housman writes:

'I hope you are back safe from among the Americans.

'I enclose, corrected, the first 4 slips of the Manilius notes. These can now be printed in pages, in combination with the text, which I returned corrected more than a month ago. Care should be taken that at any rate the *beginning* of a note on a line of the text should be on the same page as the line itself. This is not *absolutely* necessary when the two pages are both presented to the eye at once; but it is absolutely necessary where turning the leaf would be involved.

'Now that the term is over I shall be progressing quickly with the corrections and the preface. I mean to stay here for the vacation.'

On December 13:

'I enclose slips 5-12 of the Manilius notes.

¹ *My Diaries*, Part II, p. 287. A. S. F. Gow in *A. E. Housman* (p. 47) describes Housman as saying 'the description was perfectly accurate (except that so far as he could remember there was little to drink)'.

'I also have over-eaten myself this term (being asked to so many College feasts) and drunk too much of that noble but deleterious wine Madeira.'¹

On December 19:

'I now enclose about half of the preface to Manilius, with figures *a* to *g* for insertion. Over the page I give some directions for the printer.'

Here are the directions:

'Preface.

'The type, both large and small, should be the same as in the preface to Book I.

'The figures must be neatly and clearly executed. They should on no account be larger than I have drawn them; indeed I should like them to be considerably smaller, provided that clearness is not sacrificed.'

On December 28 he writes:

'... I should have thought I ought to have received by this time the combination of text and notes (slips 1-22). A fortnight hence I shall begin to be busy again, and have little time for this job. But I suppose all Scotland will be drunk.'²

On December 31:

'1. I have returned under another cover the seven diagrams executed by the printers, with directions.

'2. I enclose herewith a diagram (Z) and letter-press, both of which are to stand on the page facing the first page of text and notes: their size must therefore be regulated accordingly.

¹ Housman had a great liking for Madeira, drinking it now and again instead of Port. Once, not very long before his death, dining with him at Trinity, I was told by the Master that I should try the Madeira, even though I had already refused that wine, as it was in part a present to the College from Housman. It appeared that there was some limit to the price the Wine Committee would pay for Madeira and this particular wine was above it. Rather than it should be passed over, Housman made up the difference out of his own pocket. I obeyed the Master's instructions and in fact drank more than one glass. When, later in the evening, I travelled up to London from Cambridge, I slept through every minute of the journey. It was a noble wine. ² Scotland's reputed habit at the New Year.

This is the last diagram which I shall require: they are eleven in all, I think.

'3. I also enclose a short paragraph to stand at the beginning of the preface.

'4. Will you lunch with me at the Café Royal on Wednesday Jan. 3; and, if you can, will you name your own time?

'5. I have to thank you for a note and a novel.'

And a postcard on the same day:

'As regards the Manilius diagrams, it occurs to me that perhaps I ought to remark that I drew them as they are to appear in print, without allowing for the reversal of right and left which takes place in printing.'

And 'under separate cover' a further letter:

'I return the seven drawings of diagrams for the Manilius, and I return also my own original drawings, *which must also be returned to the printers.*

'The work is very nicely executed, and the only fault I find with it is that the artist has imitated too closely my own imperfect draughtsmanship. I have failed in several cases to put II and Q on the same level, and in the diagram c (hexagona) the inequality is unpleasing to the eye and should be corrected somewhat as I have pencilled on the tissue paper.

'As to the size of the blocks, the chief matter to be considered is the following. It is important that the diagrams should be inserted exactly at those points which I have indicated in my MS. But when the preface is put into pages, it may happen that the end of a page will cut a diagram in two; and the greater the perpendicular height of the diagram, the oftener this is likely to happen, and the more difficult it will be to remedy.

'The printers must remember to place under the diagrams the titles shown in my drawings.'

And so ended the year 1911, but not the work that Housman had still to do in connexion with this second Manilius volume. There were, as will be seen, delays after delays, all of them vexatious, none of them, at this length of time, easy to understand or to explain. But neither with tongue nor with pen was Housman either peevish or angry.

X

MANILIUS II AND SUNDRY LETTERS

YES, the troubles with Manilius II did indeed last into the New Year. On January 4, 1912, Housman writes from Trinity:

'I return pp. 17-48 of the Manilius notes corrected. The printers have introduced two new errors, *aque* for *quae* on p. 25 and II for I on p. 33: this last is a perfectly atrocious action, and I cannot imagine how such a thing could come to pass. I wonder where they will stop if they once begin altering numerals: it will be impossible for me to detect them except by chance.

'I want to have pp. 1-16 again, as I overlooked some things which were wrong.

and three days later:

'I return the three redrawings of diagrams, together with the originals, which should also be returned to the printers.

'The only error is that in the diagram M the small loop of the sign of Leo is not rightly executed. I have now drawn it more clearly in pencil on the original.'

and on January 9 a postcard on which he dryly remarks that he is obliged (and presumably reassured) by my 'note of yesterday'; 'but I certainly do wish to see pp. 17-48 again at some time before they are printed.'

On January 12 he evidently feels that we are approaching the end of our work:

'I hope that the Manilius may appear before the end of February, and it occurs to me that it might avoid delay if they already began to prepare the cover: they know the number of pages (text and notes and preface combined) well enough to be able to judge of the size: the only addition will be about 3 pages of index, which I cannot complete till the preface is

paged. I therefore enclose a rough pattern: the type and colour to be just the same as vol. I. The label on the back to be

MANILII II. HOVSMAH'

But he does not dismiss the book from his desk until February 1:

'I enclose the only parts of the Manilius in which there are still corrections to be made, and I also send the Index (to be printed in double columns just as in the other volume), and Corrigenda to Book I. to face p. 118. This completes the book.'

And even then he was premature, for he writes on February 11:

'I enclose the last corrections of proofs. I do not want to see them again, and so far as I am concerned all is now ready for publication. I suppose I can trust them to make the binding the same colour as Book I.'

More work has however to be done and on February 18 he encloses 'a list of copies to be sent "from the author", and also for review'. On February 29 he asks: 'When will the precious work be published? The Cambridge term ends on March 15, the coal-strike begins to-morrow, and the destruction of the national wealth is a question of days.'

But even then the printers seem not to have finished with the book and must have raised some fresh query about the proofs, for at 11.15 a.m. on March 4 he went (in some anger, I am sure—very possessed anger though) to the Cambridge post office and sent off this telegram: 'I expressly said no corrections required Housman.' And on April 28: 'A month ago you wrote to say that you were informed that Manilius II was on the sea. Where are you now informed that it is? at the bottom? or is the vessel approaching London via Yokohama?' And on May 1, 1912, he writes:

'... Two months ago I sent you a list of the persons and newspapers to which I wished copies of the Manilius to be sent. Probably you have lost it, in which case please let me

know at once and I will draw up a new one; don't keep the poor wretches waiting another couple of months.

'Whether I can lunch with a person who is so far from being what he should be is a question which I will consider between now and my next visit to London.'

No more letters until July 2, 1912:

'I shall be staying in London during the first few days of next week; so that if you are there, and still cherish your benevolent intention of asking me to lunch, you will have your chance.

'I see that you are coming out as a novelist: "Huîtres" or "Crevettes roses" or some such title.'

The novel I had written was my first, *Caviare*. It had just been announced.

On July 5 an acceptance of my invitation to lunch:

'I shall be delighted to lunch with you on Tuesday. I expect to sleep Saturday night at Liverpool St., Sunday at G. Vize,¹ 15 Spencer Rd., Putney, Monday at Charing Cross Hotel.

'You can send Manilius to this infatuated philosopher, since he seems to want him.'

On July 23 he deals with a Mr. Byrne, but where the translation into Greek appeared I do not know:

'I suggest that what Mr. Byrne really wants to do is to print one poem out of *A Shropshire Lad* with a Greek translation. This he may do: of course he must not print the whole book; nor more than one poem, unless he makes separate application for each.'

On July 30 he writes about another composer who wants permission:

'I remember the name of Graham Peel as a composer to whom I gave some permission. If he mentions the name of the author I don't think he is bound to mention the name of the book; and he probably altered the title because Bredon Hill has been set to music by so many composers and he wanted to differentiate, which I think is harmless.

¹ See p. 124.

'It was not Bourg but Bourges that I went to.

'I saw your case in the papers and wondered what exactly it was about. I don't think any of my letters are very incriminating.'

My 'case' to which Housman refers was annoying to me, but, luckily, it was very quickly out of the way. My first publishing business had been sold by the Trustee (my always good friend, H. A. Moncrieff) to Mr. Alexander Moring, of the De La More Press. In due course Mr. Moring came, as he thought, into possession of the rather large mass of correspondence that lay in the office files, and going through it thought, not unnaturally, that some of the letters—those from the better known authors—would be of value. Finding that he was right, he sold them to a bookseller, who forthwith issued a catalogue of his purchase—lots of letters from all sorts of distinguished people, George Meredith, Bernard Shaw and A. E. Housman among them. I knew nothing about the transaction until Clement Shorter reflected unpleasantly in his Literary Letter in the *Sphere* on what he supposed was my part in the affair. I hurried to Mr. Moncrieff, who disclaimed all responsibility, declaring that he had only lent the letters to Mr. Moring and that I would have his support in any steps I might be advised I could take. So I set the law in motion and applied for an injunction against the bookseller—and, wonderful to relate, obtained it 'pending the trial of the action'. It fell therefore either to me or to the bookseller to set the case down for trial, but we must both have been doubtful of our ground for neither of us took any steps; and although I did, I believe, on a later occasion see whether I couldn't buy out any interest that the bookseller might or might not have, the attempt came to nothing. Then, later, the bookseller having died and the fashion for selling the letters of live personages having set in, his son suggested that we

might come to terms. We did, and the letters that a customer of his particularly coveted, those from Bernard Shaw, went to New York. The booksellers, father and son, behaved very pleasantly and straightforwardly over the whole business, and I have no cause for complaint either against them or against Mr. Moring, who acted in good faith. Anyhow, some letters of Alfred Housman came back into my hands, but, as he himself suggested, they were not 'incriminating', and they were few in number.

In that early autumn of 1912 Housman went to Italy, and on September 7 writes to me from the Hôtel de l'Europe, 'Venise', to acknowledge the gift of my novel *Caviare* which was just appearing:

'Your gift came just as I was starting, and prevented me from paying W. H. Smith and Son six shillings for some much less entertaining work to read on the journey. I read with great interest all through, though the Monte Carlo parts perhaps are not equal to the Parisian and American. These last seem to me particularly good. I have just seen a favourable review in the *Telegraph*.

'I hope you will not now take to writing poetry or editing *Manilius*.

'I am now going to Paris and shall be at the Continental probably till the 16th.'

On September 12 he writes to me from the Continental:

'The date at which I expect to be back is 3.25 at Charing Cross on Wednesday the 18th. If you carry your kindness so far as to ask me to Cookham Dean that night, I should be very pleased to come; if not, I can easily go on to Cambridge and see my anointed sovereign. . . .'

The letter ends with the advice not 'to go any more' to a restaurant in Paris of which we were both fond.

On November 14 he writes: 'The female novel which you gave me when I saw you last was very readable. I forget its name, but it contained an indiscreet portrait of

Somerset Maugham.' That novel was *The Limit*, its author Ada Leverson¹ who wrote many others as amusing and as readable. George Moore wrote to her that she was a 'patterist of the first rank' ('and the best parts of Shakespeare and Balzac are patter') and likened her to Jane Austen. She was known to her friends as 'The Sphinx', and among those friends was Oscar Wilde, whom she befriended when he most needed friends. Somerset Maugham was her friend too. I have no reason to suppose that he thought the portrait 'indiscreet'. In fact Mrs. Leverson's Hereford Vaughan had very little likeness, except in the topographical character of his first name and the pronunciation of his second, to the author of *Of Human Bondage*. Moore, by the way, would not allow me to make use of his words to attract novel readers to 'The Sphinx's' work. In this smallness he resembled George Meredith, who was even annoyed at the idea that his praise of Frank Harris's short stories should be spread abroad.

On December 11 Housman utters one of his refusals: 'The permission asked by the Rev. H. S. Allen to print the lines from *A Shropshire Lad* must be refused. I return his letter.' I have forgotten the reason, but it may well have been anticlericalism.

¹ See *Author Hunting: Memories of Years Spent Mainly in Publishing, 1897-1925*. By Grant Richards. London. 1934.

XI

THE POET'S RESTAURATEUR

IT is time, perhaps, that I should say something more of Housman as a gourmet, as a lover of good food and good wine. I had, generally as his guest, often eaten with him in the restaurants of London, but it was not until the late spring of 1907 that, passing through Paris with Ernest Oldmeadow on the way to Touraine, I had for the first time the luck to find that I had coincided with A.E.H. Much interested in food myself and anxious to learn more about wine, I was, I thought, at last to eat with Housman in a Paris restaurant. I hoped it would be under Frédéric at the Tour d'Argent on the Quai de la Tournelle. Frédéric was well described by Lieut.-Col. N. Newnham Davis in *The Gourmet's Guide to Europe*:

'Since Joseph of the Marivaux died Frédéric remains the one great "character" in the dining world of Paris. In appearance he is the double of Ibsen, the same sweeping whiskers, the same wave of hair brushed straight off from the forehead. He is an inventor of dishes, and it is as well to ask for a list of his "creations", which are of fish, eggs, meat and fruit, and generally named after some patron of the establishment. . . . A Marquis, M. de Lauzières de Themines, has written a long poem about Frédéric, which is printed on the back of the menu.'¹

And it was at the Tour d'Argent, which I already knew well, that Housman did give me rendezvous. Yes, I knew it well, and I knew that in the Marquis's poem the dish which

¹ I may rescue here four lines from M. de Themines's poem, lines describing the serving of Frédéric's canard:

*Là, d'un canard, dont reste la carcasse,
Dans une boîte, on la broie, on la moule.
Un rude engin l'écrase, la concasse.
Il en résulte un jus exquis au goût.*

In the many years that this poem has decorated the *carte* of the Tour d'Argent something has gone wrong with these lines. I print them as they nowadays appear.

Frédéric had invented for Housman, *barbue Housman*, had its place, for the English poet and the *traiteur* were well known to one another—and the poet was known too to the *sommelier*. I found that the name of Housman commanded immediate respect. But on this occasion there was a great fly in the ointment of my happiness. I had come to France to convalesce after a sharp attack of influenza followed by a worse bout of shingles. My doctor had told me that I could go to France but that I was to eat very simply and, above all, to avoid red meat and red wine. Oldmeadow, before we started, had agreed to this inconvenient limitation of his companion's diet, but Housman knew nothing of it. He had ordered the dinner earlier in the day (as was his wont) and when I saw it written down my determination to obey my doctor's orders went by the board. There was a characteristic but simple soup, of course, and we ate the illustrious *barbue*. It was followed by the *canard à la presse* for which Frédéric was famous. He was a good showman, was Frédéric, and he saw to it that the guest was given a card bearing the name of the house and certifying that the duck he had before him was Number so-and-so of the ducks that had been so prepared since Frédéric had taken over the establishment. Certainly that duck was the richest, and the most succulent, that I have ever eaten; and with it went the richest sauce. With the food a fine white Burgundy, followed by a great old red Burgundy! And coffee . . . and a *fine* dating back to the beginning of the last century. Often, often, thereafter did I dine with Housman in France, but that 1907 meal was the finest that he ever gave me—and those of my readers who know anything of the dread malady from which I was suffering will also know that I went away to tear myself to pieces and to suffer the torments of the damned. But it had been worth it.¹

¹ See p. 119.

We never again dined together at Frédéric's although years later I made an attempt. Housman was to be my guest, and on this occasion it was I who went in the morning to order the repast. It was just before lunch, for at that hour I knew that I should have the assistance of the *patron* himself.

I was received by the *maître d'hôtel*:

'Monsieur would like to order dinner? Why, certainly, Monsieur. Monsieur's guest will be Monsieur Housman. Ah, I know him well. It is a great honour when Monsieur Housman visits the establishment'; and he bustled about to bring me the card of the day.

'But I would like Monsieur Frédéric's assistance in ordering dinner. Can I see him? If he is still at his *déjeuner* I can wait a little. . . .'

'Monsieur Frédéric is not here, Monsieur.'

'Not here! Why—it's just lunch time! How can that be?'

'I regret, Monsieur, but Monsieur Frédéric is not here.'

'Well, I will wait. I do not care to order a dinner for Monsieur Housman without his advice.'

'But he will not be back, Monsieur.'

'Ah, he is taking a day's holiday. That is unfortunate for me. But perhaps he will be back before the hour of dinner. Surely. I will come in at half-past seven.'

'No, Monsieur, I am sorry, but Monsieur Frédéric will not be here at that hour.'

'Damn! He is on holiday, I suppose. Why not have told me to begin with? I had never thought of the great man taking a holiday. What will he do without his admirers and his pots and pans? But as I am to be in Paris for a week I will make our visit on another day. When will Monsieur Frédéric be back?'

'Monsieur Frédéric will not be back, Monsieur. He is dead.'

And neither Housman nor I had the heart to continue that day our plan of dining at the Tour d'Argent. I do not remember where we went. We cannot have enjoyed our dinner as we had hoped to do. Perhaps we went to Marguery's or to Foyot's. There was no other house to which Housman was attached as he was to Frédéric and his dishes. He used, however, in the years immediately before the last war, when asked which restaurant in Paris he preferred, to answer that, taking one thing with another, he thought that the cooking at the Café de Paris was the best. But during that war the Café de Paris closed its doors, and when it did re-open them it had no longer the same *décor*. And Marguery is no more; and Foyot too has gone, as have Paillard and Voisin. I write only of the restaurants of Housman's day. He frequented all four of them.

XII

PROVENCE—AND THEN THE WAR

HOUSMAN, who was generally so ready for his poems to be set to music, refused almost invariably, as I have said, to allow—at least in the case of *A Shropshire Lad*—any of them to be published in anthologies or in newspapers. Occasionally an editor in England would do what *McClure's Magazine* had done in America, print a whole poem, or a few verses of a poem, in his pages. Housman would come to know of this through the activity of his press-cutting agency and he would then exhibit considerable annoyance—for a few hours: 'If the *Daily* —— is an English paper', he wrote from Trinity on January 4, 1913, 'will you ask it what business it has to do this? I am assuming that copyright covers such cases.' His assumption was correct, but nevertheless nothing much could be done in such circumstances except to remonstrate with the editor and warn him not to do it again. Housman was averse from litigation, and I, in my turn, did not want to annoy an editor who very possibly had never heard of *A Shropshire Lad* and no doubt thought he was doing a poor devil of an unknown poet a kindness. This letter is the first I had from Housman in 1913. It is followed by one of January 17. Incidentally, I must have had a recurrence of the malady which visited me in 1907.

'I was exceedingly sorry to hear of your illness. I remember your having some similar trouble, which you bore with great fortitude, once when we were in Paris together. One of my chief objections to the management of the universe is that we suffer so much more from our gentler and more amiable vices than from our darkest crimes.

'If the *Daily* —— will publish an expression of regret, that is all I want: no fee, on any account. What I object to is that

when some people have asked leave to print my poems, and I have refused it, other people go and print them without asking.

'I shall be in London for a few hours on Tuesday, but only to keep a dinner engagement. I don't know when I am likely to be up for any time.'

Nothing then until April 20, again from Trinity:

'I return with thanks Frank Harris's story,¹ which I am glad to have read, though I think the conception is better than the execution. Thanks also for the book about wine.

'I forgot, when you were going off to Paris, to tell you to eat *morilles*, which are in season now. But perhaps you did so, or had done so already.'

Morilles, I may as well explain for the unlearned reader, are a sort of corrugated mushroom and very, very good. You *can* buy them in England—in season, fresh; out of season, dried.²

On June 11 a postcard: he is 'going to Paris on Sunday for about a week, most likely to the Hotel Majestic, Avenue Kléber'.

On September 23 a letter from Trinity about my second novel, *Valentine*:

'Your new encroachment on literature reached me just as I was going abroad, and I found it excellently suited for reading while travelling. I am only just back, or I would have thanked you before. I have seen a review which says it is better than

¹ 'The Irony of Chance' in *Unpath'd Waters*. But I sent it to Housman in proof. It was Harris's habit to have his short stories set up in type by the Chiswick Press, and then to nurse them, to show them to his friends, to get their approval of this word or of that comma. It was so that I acquired a proof of this particular story.

² P. Morton Shand in his *A Book of Food* (London: Cape. 1927), p. 180, says: 'Chief among the edible fungi are the *Cèpes* or *Boleti*, of which there is a whole family, some of them being poisonous. After the *Cèpes* come the *Chanterelles*, or *Girolles*, known in Germany as *Steinpilzen*; the *Agaric délicieux*; the *Mousserons*, from which the word mushroom is presumably derived; the exquisite honey-combed *Morilles*; the *Boules de Neige*; the *Champignons à la Bague*; the coral-like *Clavaires*, perhaps the most delicious of all, and a hundred other less known names.'

Caviar, and I hope the public will take that view, though I found Caviar the more continuously entertaining.

'I was chiefly in the west of Normandy, riding about in a motor car which I hired very cheap in Paris.'

On September 24 a further reference to the same book, in which much of the plot hinges on the fact that two horses have names that begin with the letters of the alphabet that Housman mentions. He writes:

'Thanks for the cheque, for which I enclose receipt. It is rather a weight off my mind, as I thought you might have been betting on horses whose names began with JE.

'Rothenstein told me that he had given permission to reproduce one of his drawings of me. There are two, one of which is much more repulsive than the other,¹ because the artist touched it up with a lot of imaginary black strokes; and no doubt this is the one selected. It is no good my minding, so I do not mind: if I did mind, I daresay I should mind the letter-press even more.

'You will have had a note from me about Valentine which crossed yours.'

'No, I shall not be in Paris. I am now staying at home and being good', he says in his next note, of September 27; and for all I know he remained at home all through the following term and vacation, save for a week-end visit to me at Cookham Dean on January 17, 1914, for the next letter of which I have record is dated January 24, 1914, and is from Trinity: 'Our special Guest Nights this term are Thursday Feb. 19 and Wednesday March 4. Will you come and stay the night here at either date?' I chose the second and as it is apparently my first visit to him at Cambridge, my first visit indeed to him under, so to speak, his own roof, I am instructed on February 26:

'Dinner is at 7.45. By all means come by the train you speak of if you cannot come earlier. I suppose you could not come for lunch? because I have some rather particular hock.

¹ See p. 89.

'Drive to Whewell's Court, Trinity, Sidney Street entrance. My rooms are over that gate.'¹

And I am again instructed on March 1 in a letter which displays his care about detail—and the comfort of his guests:

'It is very good of you to arrange to come earlier, so much so that I could not possibly ask you to come earlier still; but how matters stand is this.

'Your 12.20 St. Pancras train gets to Cambridge at 1.31, not 1.21 as you say, and lunch could hardly begin before 1.45. I have asked A. C. Benson to meet you, and he is obliged to leave us at 2.40, which is rather short time. If you could come by the 12 o'clock, reaching Cambridge at 1.18, we could sit down nearly at 1.30 and be more comfortable. But that train is not only earlier but starts from Liverpool Street; and I can't expect or wish you to sacrifice serious business for such a small difference. In any case, when you get to the station, take a taxi. They are not allowed to stand in the station-yard, but a porter will call one, or you can walk across the yard to the rank in the road. My address, I forget if I told you, is Whewell's Court, Trinity, Sidney Street entrance.'

A month later he writes to say that I may give Philip Lee Warner and the Riccardi Press permission to print a very special (and limited) edition of *A Shropshire Lad*, although why he did so I have no idea, except that it put some money in my pocket, for he objected, as I have shown, to limited editions and wide margins and to expensive books generally. He continues:

'I have to thank you for the article you sent me on Carcassonne, which was very well written. I am going to Paris on Sunday and thence to Marseilles on Tuesday: what next I don't exactly know. I expect to be back here about the 27th.'

I must then, as it was his first visit to Marseilles, have provided suggestions as to where he should go, where he should stop and where he should eat, based on my own experience and on an itinerary which, nearly twenty years earlier, had

¹ See p. 266.

been worked out for me by Thomas A. Janvier, that American writer turned Provençal, for he writes at length on May 2, 1914:

'I ought to write and give you some account of my doings in the south, about which you gave yourself so much trouble. I took the walk you mapped out from Cassis to La Ciotat on a very beautiful day, and followed your lines I think pretty well. I did not go to Ste Baume however, as it did not happen to square with my other plans. I ate much bouillabaisse, the best at Isnard's, the next best in the suburb of L'Estaque; but in several places it was not so good as at Foyot's in Paris. Brandade I did not think much of, and Aioli at Pascal's was rather nasty, perhaps because lukewarm. The Gourmet's Guide on Marseilles is full of blunders: the errors are as bloody as the Dwarf.

'I hired a motor with an amiable meridional chauffeur who knew the country, and went to Aix, Arles, Aigues-mortes, Montmajour (which is probably what you meant when you wrote Fontville),¹ Les Baux, St Remy, Beaucaire Nîmes, Pont, du Gard, Avignon, Villeneuve les Avignon, Vaucluse, Carpentras (where I did not see Dreyfus, nor much else), Vaison, Orange, and I think that is all. Weather good, with a few days of mistral; judas trees in very magnificent bloom. I was in Paris with the King, but he did me no harm except once keeping me waiting half-an-hour to cross the street.

'The College library wants as many editions as it can get of the Shropshire Lad, so will you send me one specimen of each of those you now have on sale.'

If anyone wants to trace Housman's steps on the walk from Cassis to La Ciotat to which he refers, I can tell him that he should go as far as he can to the east end of Cassis and then follow the cliff edge till he gets to La Ciotat. I do not remember that there is any proper path.

Three weeks later, on May 31, Housman returns to this subject, and, considering that I published 'The Dwarf's' book, knew Marseilles pretty well, had considerable ex-

¹ I think not. I saw a 'bull-tease' at Fontville. T. A. Janvier sent me to it. Besides, does it not figure in Alphonse Daudet?

perience of *bouillabaisse*, and that the wine in question had always been a favourite of mine, I might well have been ashamed of my carelessness—but there, publishers do not always read the manuscripts of the books they publish!

‘The errors in the Marseilles pages of the *Gourmet’s Guide* are not such as to lead anyone seriously astray in practice (except the statement that you get *Bouillabaisse* in perfection at *La Réserve*), and some of them are only misprints. The really outrageous thing is the fairy-tale on p. 104 about a wine called *Pouilly Suisse* after the proprietor of a vineyard, both non-existent. The wine is *Pouilly-Fuissé*, i.e. *Pouilly* blent with *Fuissé*, or *Fuissey* as they sometimes spell it.

‘You ought not to reprint my immortal poems, as you appear to have done in 1912, without asking me about corrections. The consequence is that two mistakes in punctuation have been carried on.

‘I observe that the illustrated edition is now bound in black instead of white. It strikes me as ugly, but I don’t set up to be a judge, and I am indifferent to the fate of that edition, which was only printed to amuse you. I daresay black is appropriate to the funereal nature¹ of the contents.’

On June 6, 1914, Housman writes from Trinity:

‘I shall be paying one of my rare visits to London next Tuesday and lunching with a friend (G. H. Vize, collector of antiquities and china, once champion heavy-weight boxer &c.) at the *Café Royal* at 1.30, and should be very pleased if you could join us. If you can, will you let me know by the first post on Tuesday: if you do not reply I will not expect you.’

I believe that this was one of the few occasions on which I allowed unhappy circumstance to prevent my accepting an invitation from A.E.H. I was to have another opportunity of meeting G. H. Vize. Followed a note of June 12, harping on ‘*The Dwarf of Blood’s*’ inaccurate treatment of Marseilles: ‘*Newnham Davis* has got himself, or you have

¹ It is interesting that Housman should have used this phrase about his book.

got him, into a great muddle.' And then on June 28 (at Woodchester¹) the Riccardi *Shropshire Lad* is giving trouble. The question of proofs again:

'These Riccardi people must needs annoy me when I am away on a week's holiday. I have made in pencil corrections of all the errors I have found, some of which seem to be deliberate. I go back to Cambridge on Tuesday.'

But by July 10 all is well: 'These [proofs] seem to be right.'

And then came the War, but there is no immediate mention of it in any letter. On September 6 he writes from Trinity:

'I have corrected two misprints in the poem, and I have no objection to its being printed, as it was printed, I believe, in a similar connection by Ross in a bibliography.

'Do not disturb Frank Harris in his beliefs, which are sincere and characteristic, that I am a professor of Greek and that there are 200 pages in *A Shropshire Lad*.'

But what 'the poem' was I do not know; nor do I now find it possible to explain the allusion to Frank Harris.

On September 10 a reiteration: 'Permission must not be given. . . . For 10 or 12 years I have adhered to the rule of not allowing my verses to appear in anthologies.' On October 2 (from 20 Belmont, Bath) he accepts an invitation to Cookham Dean for the week-end of October 17, and adds: 'Please remember me very kindly to your uncle, who was good enough to call on me in Cambridge last June, when unfortunately I was out.' That uncle was Herbert Richards, who had helped to plough him for Greats.²

Yes; no single reference to the War in any of the few letters Housman wrote to me in 1914! That he was doing what he could, however, is told in *A.E.H.* (p. 106):

'At the beginning of the War he sent the Chancellor a

¹ The Woodchester of the Rev. H. Housman's *The Story of our Museum*.

² See pp. xviii, 83, 97.

donation of several hundred pounds, and again during the financial crisis in 1931, when the National Government was first formed, came to the rescue so far as his means allowed.'

Meanwhile apparently the literary world, Germany notwithstanding, was carrying on as usual and anthologies were being made and published. On February 11, 1915, Housman writes: 'I should be pleased to oblige Mr [Edward] Thomas¹ whose book on Swinburne I thought very good, but I have been saying no to all anthologists for more than 12 years, and it is impossible to make an exception now.'

And then, by implication, the War is mentioned:

'... My holidays begin on March 13, and I am beginning to consider what to do with them. What are your present ideas about the Riviera? My own notion is to spend about 3 weeks abroad, and it would suit me best if those 3 weeks were either at the beginning or the end of the vacation: i.e. roughly March 13 to April 3, or else April 5 to April 26; but these limits I mention as the extremes of earliness, lateness, and narrowness: I need not necessarily go so early nor so late, nor be abroad so short a time.

'You probably know that passports will be necessary, and that all old passports ceased to be valid on the 1st of this month.

'Would you come and spend a night here before the end of term? All our feasts and also our usual guest-nights are suppressed, and our meals are somewhat simplified; but on Tuesdays and Thursdays we have rather better dinners than on other days. I don't ask you for a Sunday because we have a Sabbatarian kitchen and I could not give you a proper lunch. The only Tuesday or Thursday ahead which would not suit me is the 25th inst. If you can select a date to come, come for lunch and I will try to invite a kindred spirit. I have lately invested in rather good Corton 1898.'

Then on February 17: '... do not be surprised if a sentry tries to keep you out with a bayonet, as this is now a barracks,

¹ This is, of course, the same Edward Thomas about whom I had got into trouble in 1907. See pp. 77-8.

sparsely inhabited by four Fellows of Trinity.¹ We do not dress for dinner.'

Housman and I did go to the South: 'Hitherto I have always refused to go to the Riviera, but now is my chance, when the worst classes who infest it are away', he wrote to a friend, Mrs. Thicknesse, a few days before we started.

¹ He omits to mention here that there were also five hundred soldiers billeted in the building in which he wrote.

XIII

A WAR-TIME VISIT TO THE RIVIERA

THE regulations governing the endorsement of passports to allow of their holders travelling from England to France were tightened up later on, but in the late winter of 1914-15 I found little difficulty in getting the required permissions for Housman and myself. I do not know either the date on which we started or that on which we returned, but we were certainly back and Housman was in College by the end of the first week in April 1915. We crossed the Channel by way of Folkestone and Dieppe. The boat carried few passengers. We had a deck cabin to ourselves. There was, we supposed, some danger of the ship being mined or torpedoed, but I recall that Housman neither expressed nor showed any nervousness on that score. He went to our cabin, exchanged his hat for the small and very out-of-date cricket cap that he so often wore, stretched himself out and, before we had left the harbour he was, or appeared to be, asleep. I was more curious, stopping on deck until we were well away from England. When, as I supposed, we were half-way across, I awoke to the sound of hooting and found that the steamer had almost stopped, and then that it was turning. The hooter went again. I supposed that we were preparing to zigzag or, vaguely, that we had been forced by the enemy to heave to. I was muzzy with sleep. Not waking my companion, I went on deck. There was a fog, and it was almost light. Again the hooter! Something must be happening. I went back to the cabin. 'Something's happening,' I said, shaking Housman by the shoulder; 'you'd better get up and come out.'

'Why?' he answered. 'It'll be time to wake up when something *has* happened.'

I looked at my watch. And then to my surprise I saw through the clearing fog that, early though it was, we had reached Dieppe. We had made, so to speak, a record run, and I had been deceived by the absence of any harbour lights visible to my landsman's eye.

Neither Paris nor the journey south has left any incident in my mind. I had promised Housman that if, as he half suspected that he would do, he found the Riviera ornate, over-built, meretricious, a scene-painter's paradise, vulgar and crowded, we would go elsewhere; but I had also promised him good food and good wine, good plumbing, sunshine and walks through unspoiled woods and over apparently untrodden hills. He wanted to see all that there was to see. The day should be given to open air, excursions, exercise; the night—well, after dinner, if there should be theatres and cinemas and if there were casinos open, we would visit them—but casinos and such attractions were to take a very secondary place in our programme.

We stayed through the whole of our visit at Nice—at the Westminster. The town at that time held neither many wounded soldiers nor many soldiers of any kind. Such troops as there were, as I remember it, were mainly Colonial, many of them black. One would be woken in the morning by funeral music on the Promenade des Anglais, for influenza was rife in the town and the blacks went down like flies. There would be marching soldiers on the way to the burial ground. In the following winters Nice became thronged with troops of all kinds, English and American. It was gay, crowded. It was a very different Riviera from that we saw. Then it was sober and dull. Neither at Cannes nor at Nice nor at Monte Carlo was there more than a tiny sprinkling of the habitual visitors. Ernest Belfort Bax and

his wife were the only ones whom I can recall. Bax's persistent curiosity, his old-fashioned scholarship and ponderous humour gave Housman pleasure; his wife's Germanic domesticities and her fussy preoccupations with her lord's comforts and dignities amused him. They would have it that they should entertain him in their rue St Philippe flat, but in one way and another I managed to spare my companion what I believed—erroneously, he afterwards told me—he would find rather an ordeal. The Baxian theory and practice of hospitality was of the old days, thoroughly Teutonic, too, too filling. One had to partake, not sparingly, of dish after dish. The table groaned with good things and with wines of divers colours. The meal would last from one till three. To dear Mrs. Bax it would be almost an insult if her guests refused anything. Housman was not a great eater and I was nervous on his account. I had to invent excuses. We had so many excursions to make. There were so many places to visit. And indeed we were to be only a fortnight in the south.

The tables at Monte Carlo amused Housman not at all. We went in one day after dining at the Hôtel de Paris and, with distaste, he watched me lose a couple of louis at roulette. That anyone should be willing to risk his hard-earned money on the chance of making a few shillings or a few pounds and should find pleasure or amusement in so doing amazed him. Of course, at the time of his visit to the Principality such gaiety as the place generally held had gone underground. The streets, the cafés and the restaurants were either closed or they were not crowded; the Rooms themselves were unusually depressing, almost funereal. But we often returned to Monte Carlo to eat and to drink; the Burgundies which Monsieur Fleury recommended to Housman at the Paris won his favour; its wine-list impressed him. One wine in particular gave him pleasure: a La Tache which

the *sommelier* told him he should order in preference to a Clos de Tart. But I forget its year. But, even gastronomically, Monte Carlo was a place shorn of its glories—as was Nice, although the old Régence, under Monsieur Velay, in what is now the Avenue de la Victoire, was a place to which we returned again and again. Another house, the Réserve at Beaulieu, Housman thought as good as I think it myself—one of the half-dozen best restaurants in the whole of the world we knew. But Monsieur Lottier, although his cellar had still its rare *crûs*, was working with hardly any proper staff either in restaurant or cellar. We took no meals, except early breakfast, in our hotel.

It was near to Beaulieu that we had what promised to be an unpleasant adventure. We had gone by tram to Villefranche, and there, alighting and following the path below the railway line, had started to walk round Cap Ferrat to St Jean and Beaulieu. A lovely walk which I had taken many times before. I did not know that the War had placed much of it out of bounds. The military authorities had, moreover, omitted to make this fact plain to the rambler and, suddenly, when we had reached the path below the lighthouse, we were challenged. My own French is very bad; Housman's was not very good. I feared that we were for it, that we should be arrested and cast into the verminous jail at Nice and that weeks would very likely pass before Housman's distinction would win us release. But his presence of mind, his good humour, his readiness and lack of embarrassment impressed the officer before whom we were brought and we were immediately released, with the warning that the absence of a sign-board was no excuse and that if we were found wandering in other similarly forbidden zones we were unlikely to be treated so tenderly. But instead of being able to complete our round tour of the Cap we were bidden at once to rejoin the high road.

Other excursions we made were to the Gorges du Loup (where, at the Grand Hôtel du Loup, we had admirable fresh trout and fresh truffles¹), to Gourdon, to Cannes, to Antibes, to Grasse, to Laghet, to Menton, to Eze, and to Ventimiglia. Our habit was to start off very early from Nice by automobile or by rail, and then to walk. At that time Housman was still a walker. He had not lived so long at Cambridge that he had lost his pleasure in walking. We did a deal of walking in the south.

At Ventimiglia I found that Housman could do nothing to explain the curious and huge Castello d'Appio and other military works which are above the ancient town; but our visit did become the cause of what for all I know has grown into a legend. The tale is worth telling as an example of a myth developing during the lifetime of its subject.

I have written of Belfort Bax's persistent curiosity. Poor old chap, as his years increased it grew upon him to an embarrassing extent. He would ask so many questions as to what I had been doing, what I had talked about, what I had eaten with my last host, and so on, that I often fell back on the spinning of fairy-tales in order to allay his thirst for useless knowledge. He must so have questioned me about the visit of Housman and myself to Ventimiglia. Anyhow, years later, when one day I was lunching with him and his wife in their flat in the Temple, the talk fell on Housman.

'I have often thought,' Bax remarked after a pause, 'that whether one likes the Italians or not, they are a race of gentlemen and of scholars. Just remember how they treated Housman at Ventimiglia. The French might do a thing like that—but the English—never. You can't fancy the Mayor of an English watering-place behaving in that way!'

¹ A postcard, dated January 23, 1928, sent to me after Housman's reading of my book, *The Coast of Pleasure*, says: 'The fresh truffles were not eaten alone: they were made into an omelette.' *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

'What *are* you talking about?' I answered, looking up from the pâté with which Mrs. Bax had so liberally filled my plate.

'Why, that visit of yours to Ventimiglia, of course——.'

Not having any idea what was in his mind, I asked him to explain. He had a whole orderly narrative tucked away in his brain. It ran like this:

It appears that in some way or other, perhaps through the *Continental Daily Mail*, perhaps through one of the Nice papers, it had become known that an eminent English scholar, that great Latinist, Monsieur Alfred Houseman [so spelled], the editor of *Manilius*, had honoured Nice with his presence and would be remaining on the Littoral for a week or two. Straightway, the Syndic of Ventimiglia, or Mayor, or whatever they call the chief functionary of the town, himself, as it happened, a devoted scholar, had written officially to Monsieur Houseman and had begged that as he was so close to Ventimiglia he would honour both the town and the Syndic with a visit. Housman, although averse from publicity and indeed unused to such recognition of his work, could not but graciously respond. He would come to Italy and he would bring his companion with him. A day was fixed, and we duly set forth. We travelled by train. To the Professor's astonishment—to say nothing of mine!—we found that not only was there no trouble about passports when we reached Ventimiglia but that all formalities of an irksome kind were dispensed with. The Kingdom of Italy was too sensible of the importance of the Professor's visit, and so on. . . . At the station was something that looked very much like a guard of honour—men in uniform, anyhow; and the Syndic with his supporting staff of officials stepped forward and, greeting their guest and his humble friend with great dignity, the Syndic proceeded to read out in Italian an address of welcome. At the steps of the station

stood in waiting two open carriages, decorated and with liveried attendants, and as we drove away there was a feeble artillery salute. Even Housman, unaccustomed as he was to being so fêted, was both impressed and gratified. But more was to come. The streets were thinly lined with a delighted populace and, as we crossed the bridge and drove at a smart pace towards the upper town, it broke into loud salutations. There were even, here and there, flags, and, when we came to it, the town hall, or whatever it is called, was finely decorated in honour of the English visitor. And within, in the banqueting hall, a collation, a banquet: satisfying Italian food; noble Italian wines. White wine from the Roman hills, a vintage red Chianti, foaming Asti. And as the meal came to an end the Syndic rose to his feet and delivered an oration in Latin—and good Latin it was according to him best qualified to judge—to which Housman replied in the same language. It was a fine and impressive affair. Our Italian hosts were visibly affected by this new sign of the friendship which united our two nations. They addressed their guest in their own language and in French; one or two spoke a little English. These were anxious to impress upon him their anxiety to have him come again later on, when the War had come to a happy end, and when, its rigours over, they would be able to welcome and entertain him with greater dignity and in a manner more consonant with the position that he held in England and in the great world of scholarship. Then out into the Piazza again, where the noble horses were impatiently pawing the ground, and a descent to the new town and to a station even more *en fête* than it had been on our arrival, for the populace had had time to learn more generally of the honour which was, even then, being conferred upon them.

‘And wasn’t that noble?’ Bax asked me. ‘The Latin language! The Latin race! The universality of scholarship!’

The great Italian tradition of art and literature! Would any town in England do the same?’

‘But there isn’t a word of truth in it,’ I exclaimed, laughing.

The Baxes, husband and wife, were nonplussed, flabbergasted. ‘“Not a word of truth”!’ they exclaimed. ‘Why, you told us the whole story yourself when you got back to Monte Carlo. We were waiting for you at the Café de Paris. You and Housman!’

Well, there wasn’t a word of truth in it, not a single word.

Again and again I heard them tell that story thereafter, and their friends appeared to believe it. I ceased after a while to contradict them. They made me promise to ask Housman. Bax wanted to go to Cambridge himself to ask him. I did my duty: I did ask him. He laughed at me:

‘Well, we did go to Ventimiglia,’ he said.

And six and a half years later, at Bax’s urgent request, I asked him again—in a letter this time. He replied on November 11, 1921:

‘The municipal hospitality of Ventimiglia must have made me very drunk, for I forget the whole affair. My recollection is that you and I climbed in mist or drizzle a hill with a castle on it, that we lunched at a restaurant where you after much palaver induced the proprietor to furnish us with a viand which I did not much admire, small envelopes of paste enclosing mincemeat,¹ and that we walked through the town and under some trees by the shore to a rough stone breakwater. But I suppose I dreamt all this while I was under the table.’

And I, who must have invented the whole story, possibly in Housman’s presence, perhaps when I was alone with my curious friend and his wife, just in order to allay their curiosity, to give them something to talk and to think about, felt just a little ashamed, for, as I say, it became something

¹ Ravioli.

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¹ Ravioli.

of a legend and many people, having heard it through the Baxes, very likely believe it still.

More I cannot remember of our visit to the Riviera, save that I found Housman a delightful companion, equable in temper, seldom moody, a good talker, appreciative of attention, polite to those who smoothed his path. And untiring. No one who has made his way down with me by wooded, rocky, uneven, tiring paths from Eze to the shore, has done it with more spirit or has shown more energy. He liked walking; he was willing to scramble. And he loved the southern country-side with its views, its trees and its flowers.

And best of all, from my point of view, he told me, as we travelled up to London on our return, that he had enjoyed every day of the holiday, and that he had never known a more agreeable and able courier.

XIV

MANILIUS III

SOON after our return to England I sent Housman a copy of Theodore Dreiser's *A Traveller at Forty*,¹ a strange work not now easily procurable, I believe. It was a record of the first visit paid to Europe by the author of *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy*, a fanciful book in many ways. In it I figured in no very disagreeable light—I figured and so did my family and many of my friends. From Cambridge, on April 7, 1915, Housman thanks me for it:

'I found here your gift of Dreiser's book, which I have been skimming, and I am glad to see that he recognises some of your many virtues.

'The mathematician whom you sat next to at our high table, upon hearing that I had been to the Riviera with you, said that he hoped you had not been running after women all the time. Whether this was an inference from your conversation or a generalisation from his own experience of travelling-companions I do not know.

'You crowned all your good actions by sending me that note about the permit from the Prefecture, as to which you were right when both Cook and the Consulate were wrong.'

Foolishly I was vexed at the mathematician's suggestions. In one way or another they must have got me on the raw, and childishly I protested. Housman writes in reply on April 14:

'You should not let what the mathematician said worry you.

¹ London. 1913. My copy of the same date, but with the imprint of the Century Company of New York, is inscribed "To the victim! This first copy is presented with mixed feelings and deep emotion by the editor D. Z. D.", D. Z. D. being Douglas Z. Doty, the editor of the Century Company's publications. I had induced the Company to commission the book.

When his mind is not occupied by mathematics or pottery it is apt to run on the relations of the sexes, and I seldom sit next him without that topic arising. He possesses all the editions of *Fanny Hill*, a book with which I daresay you never polluted your mind. The question he asked would probably have been asked about anyone else who had been travelling with me. You told me that Belfort Bax made some such enquiry about me.'

When I came to think of it, it certainly was true that Belfort Bax had asked me some such question about Housman's attitude to women.

We come to a more important matter on July 15: Manilius III is on the way:

'I am sorry I cannot avail myself of your kind and attractive invitation, as early in August I am going to stay with my sister and brother-in-law at Dulverton, and must first finish the text and notes of my 3rd book of Manilius, which, though it will not sell so well as your novel, is really a much more classy work. The printers, if they have not all gone to the wars, may just as well be printing this while I am on my holiday, and I should be grateful if you would begin to make arrangements. The preface is already written in the rough, and will be ready for them when they are ready for it.'

The novel, my third, was *Bittersweet*.

On September 12 a further reference to the War:

'I have now been back nearly a week, and you probably longer. I am writing now because Walter Raleigh has asked if he may print some poems from *A Shropshire Lad* in one of the Times Broadsheets for the trenches, and I have said he may; so don't immediately send him a lawyer's letter when you see them.

'There is someone in your office who sends me proofs addressed to S. E. Homeman. I don't mind opprobrious names, but I am apprehensive that the missives may go astray.'

And on September 20 a further Manilius letter:

'I have just sent you, in a separate cover, registered, the

Preface to Manilius III, which perhaps you will acknowledge receipt of, if it arrives. This completes the book, except the index and a few trifles which cannot be added till the rest is in print.

'The three figures to be inserted in the preface are to be executed just in the same way as those in Book II. I have drawn them exactly to scale.'

At the beginning of October I must have told Housman that I had recently, for the second time, married—a Hungarian lady, younger by eighteen years than myself—for, on October 3, he writes:

'I congratulate you very heartily and send you every wish for your happiness; and perhaps you will also convey my respects to Mrs. Richards and, I am inclined to add, my congratulations too, because, whatever your other faults may be, there can be few ladies who have a more good-tempered husband.

'It would give me great pleasure to come and see you on the last week-end of the month.

'I see in the paper that you are having some bother over Hugh Lane's will, which certainly seems to be ungrammatical.'

The Hugh Lane to whom he refers is Sir Hugh Lane, the collector, to whose house I had taken him in May, 1907. Lane went down in the *Lusitania*, leaving me as one of his two executors. Truly there was 'bother' about his will. Indeed the trouble remains unsettled and one day, perhaps, in a fit of characteristic generosity or in order to win some concession from Eire, the English government will cut the Gordian knot and give Dublin the Lane pictures!

Housman, having suggested coming to see us in the last week-end of the month, was invited to come on my birthday, October 21. He replies on October 16:

'I do rather think that the birthday etc. might go off better if no irrelevant visitor were there to spoil the fun; and so, in spite of my affection for children, I should like to postpone

my visit. Probably any week-end in November that suited you would suit me.

'As to the blind people, they may have what they want.'

The blind people in this case are those who have been taught to read Braille. Permission had been asked to make a Braille edition of *A Shropshire Lad*. And some permission to use *A Shropshire Lad* must have been asked by the Women's Employment Publishing Company, for on October 22 Housman writes to me curtly: 'Permission must be refused in this case.' It is likely that, other things being equal, it was refused because of his lack of sympathy with the feminist movement.

Then it is immediately arranged—in a letter of October 26—that he will come to visit us at Cookham Dean on November 5: 'I shall be glad to meet your uncle [Herbert Richards] again.' This letter is followed by one of October 27:

'I enclose, corrected, the proofs of the text and notes of Manilius III. They may now be combined and put into pages; and I enclose some directions to the printers about carrying this out. Please acknowledge receipt.'

Housman's visit in November being over, he writes on November 21 a detailed letter, again about Manilius:

'I enclose the following portions of Manilius III.

'1. Corrected proofs of Preface, which can now be put into pages.

'2. Revise of text and notes, which only requires two corrections.

'3. MS page to face p. 1.

'4. MS page to face p. 68.

'All that I shall have to add is the Index, which will be two or three pages.

'As the bulk of the volume can now be precisely ascertained, they had better begin making the cover, which will be just the same as that of Book II (price and all), except that *SECUNDVS*

will be TERTIVS, and the date MDCCCXVI, and that the label on the back will have III instead of II.'

And another on December 11:

'I enclose the MS of the Index to Manilius III, which completes the book, and I also return the paged proofs with some further corrections. By the way, in the process of putting into pages, two errors were introduced which were not in the slips, on pp. 25 and 57. I hope that these are the only two, and that the future will not produce others.

'What has your friend Tod Sloan been up to?'

What had my 'friend Tod Sloan' been up to? What indeed! An amusing, rather vainglorious chap, he was a friend of mine on the principle that an author should always be the friend of his publisher. I had encouraged, and assisted, him to write his reminiscences. No one questions that he was a great jockey.

Finally, Housman's last letter to me in 1915, one of December 22:

'I enclose the last pages of Manilius III with two corrections, and the book may now be printed and published without any more tinkering from me.

'The compliments of the season.'

XV

‘WOMEN CANNOT REASON . . .’

I WRITE about Manilius III, and shall probably write again, not out of impatience, but because, when book II was publishing, you and the printers went to sleep in each other's arms for a whole month and then wrote to ask me for corrections though I had said there would be none.

‘I sent all that I had to send before Christmas. I hope that, as I suggested, the binding is being got ready, so that the rest of the book will not have to wait for it.’

And so for me, with this letter of January 8, began the year 1916, as far at least as my chief publishing interest was concerned. No, I do not mean that Manilius was my chief publishing interest, but very definitely Housman was, and it was no satisfaction to me—very much the reverse indeed—to have myself accused of having gone to sleep in the arms of the printer and his company. I suppose, looking back, that the chief reason for all these delays of which A.E.H. complained so often and yet so agreeably, was that no printer has a great number of compositors and readers competent both to handle efficiently and expeditiously such a manuscript as that with which they had been provided. That, at the time, did not occur to me. By February 1, however, cover and label had been passed and the last two errors ‘queried in the proofs’ had been corrected; and on February 3 Housman's mind, prompted by me apparently, was turning again to foreign travel:

‘When you say you “*would like to*” go to France with me, is that a mere sigh or a serious wish? Because I should be both agreeable to it and desirous of it; only I understood that the difficulties now put in the way of getting a passport were almost insuperable. In any case I should not make the venture without a courier such as you to protect me.

'Can I induce you to come and stay with me a night or two some time this term? Oldmeadow¹ is going to be dining in hall on Sunday the 20th with the Roman Catholic Monsignore, if that will attract you, and possibly, though I am not sure, I might get him to dine with me on the Saturday. But any date that would suit you would probably suit me.

'I have not been able to see the *Studio* yet.'

But various reasons prevented our going abroad together, and an obstacle threatened my projected visit to Cambridge:

'I am writing to tell you, directly on hearing it myself, that cerebro-spinal meningitis exists among the soldiers quartered in this college, who are supposed to have brought it with them from Ashford. I am not going to stir, and I believe that infection is conveyed only by close association; but consider whether this will make you change your mind about coming here on the 19th, and let me know as soon as is convenient to you. . . .'

Apparently I took no chances for on February 14 Housman had another project:

'You must come in May, when the soldiers may be gone and in any case the place will be looking better.

'I ought to be in London for business this next Thursday, and I may as well try to combine pleasure with it; so will you assist me by coming to lunch at the Café Royal at 1.15? I hope to be there by that time, though trains are not punctual.'

And on the following day yet another printer's query about the Manilius has cropped up!

On the 18th of February Herbert Richards had suddenly died, and Housman wrote to me:

'I am very sorry indeed to see in the paper to-day the sudden death of your uncle—though I suppose it was not altogether sudden, as it took place in the Acland Home. When I saw him last, at your house, he seemed full of sturdiness. There are too few severe and thorough scholars of his sort.'

A. S. F. Gow, in his *A. E. Housman: a Sketch*, tells his readers, in connexion with the fact that Housman had been ploughed in Greats that: 'I once asked him how the exami-

¹ Ernest J. Oldmeadow.

ners had achieved this feat, and he replied that they had no option. I do not think he bore them any grudge, and with two of them, Ingram Bywater and Herbert Richards, he was on friendly terms.' Yes, I can vouch for it that he bore no grudge against my uncle, for one day he told me that he had great respect for his scholarship and that he would like to meet him. And, as I have told, they did meet and got on very well. They met on several occasions. On one of them my uncle came to Horsenden to meet us in the morning, and we walked up by Bledlow and the edge of the Chilterns to Hambleden, and so, by the river's bank, to Hurley Lock and Cookham Dean. We lunched at Bledlow, and it was rather amusing, the way in which we disposed of ourselves. My uncle had two dry biscuits in his pocket. No going into the inn for him to see what could be had! He was too austere for that. He sat on a gate and consumed his dry provision, while Housman and I ate admirable cold mutton and pickles and drank bitter—a good deal of all three! The kind of abstinence in which he regularly indulged had, I believe, a great deal to do with my uncle's comparatively early death, just as similar abstinence had with my father's.

Not that Herbert Richards was always so abstemious. I believe it was on the evening of that very same day that I opened for dinner a magnum of claret, a Lafitte of the 'seventies, one of half a dozen that, years before, William Heinemann had insisted on selling to me at much below their proper value. The two scholars were spending the week-end with us, the other guest being my aunt, Mrs. Grant Allen. Well, we did justice, the three of us, to the claret, especially after we were left alone. . . . Now in that house the dining-room was three or four steps above the level of the hall, and as the women sat in the drawing-room they commanded the dining-room door and, when it opened, could see us coming towards them. We sat, we

men, rather too long over our wine and my wife sent to remind me, as if by accident, that we had but a very small staff and that it couldn't be kept up indefinitely. . . . Well, after a while (my aunt maintained to the end of her life) our door opened and the three of us walked eight or nine yards or so to the room in which she and my wife were sitting. But we made no orderly and direct progress. No, do not think that she said we were drunk, but our progress, she said, was eccentric, uneven, slightly irregular. I, she assured me, was the most normal of the three, but we all of us, it was clear, had enjoyed our wine and had lost just a little of our control. I know it was true. It was one of the two occasions on which I saw Housman even a tiny bit under the influence of what he had been drinking—and I must have dined with him a couple of hundred times. I do not tell the story against him but rather in his defence. Just because he was fond of wine and beer it may have been thought by those who did not know him well that he did even more than occasionally drink too much, and it is as well to correct this impression. The phrase, to drink too much, is of course a relative term. Enjoy a second glass of wine, and there are people who will say they think you drink too much. Have a bottle of wine to your own cheek at a meal, and they are sure that you are drinking yourself into your grave. Housman enjoyed his wine, drank it fastidiously, and carried it like a gentleman. Mrs. Symons, his sister, has suggested that the general asceticism of his life may have resulted in the encouragement of two senses he did not curb—those of taste and smell: 'He absorbed the look and scent of flowers with a vivid perception that visibly moved him. Maybe it was this sense that afterwards made him a connoisseur of wine.'¹

¹ *Alfred Edward Housman. Supplement to the Bromsgrovian*, p. 24. And see p. vii.

We pass to another matter. A certain American had written to me and I had sent on his letter to Cambridge. Housman replies on March 2, 1916:

‘— published in 1907 an edition of Lucretius, containing nothing original, but collecting the work of others with that bibliographical fulness in which Americans excel. He has since changed his opinions on the text and developed originality as a reactionary, and his obtuseness enables him to stick to the reading of the manuscripts in many places where the critics whom he formerly followed abandoned them. I have a very low opinion of his intelligence, and he is bumptious into the bargain. . . .

‘I return —’s [the American’s] letter.

‘Probably you will have seen a notice of your uncle in last week’s Oxford Magazine, written I suppose by the Warden or someone else at Wadham.’

Among the papers which were found in Herbert Richards’s desk was an unattributed passage of verse, which his brother, the Rev. John F. Richards, who, incidentally, had been a contemporary and acquaintance of Housman’s at Oxford, sent to me that I might find out its author. The verses were:

Whate’er Assistance I had Pow’r to bring
 T’ oblige my Country, or to serve my King,
 Whene’er they call, I’d readily afford
 My Tongue, my Pen, my Counsel, or my Sword.
 Law-suits I’d shun, with as much studious Care
 As I would dens where hungry Lions are,
 And rather put up Injuries than be
 A Plague to him, who’d be a Plague to me.
 I value Quiet at a Price too great,
 To give for my Revenge so dear a Rate:
 For what do we by all our Bustle gain,
 But counterfeit Delight for real Pain?

If Heav’n a Date of many Years would give,
 Thus I’d in Pleasure, Ease and Plenty live.
 Then I’d not be with any Trouble vex’d,
 Nor have the Evening of my Days perplex’d;

But by a silent and a peaceful Death,
Without a Sigh, resign my aged Breath.
And, when committed to the Dust, I'd have
Few Tears, but friendly, dropt into my Grave,
Then would my Exit so propitious be,
All Men would wish to live and die like me.

I turned to Housman for information. He replied immediately:

'The verses are the last lines of *The Choice*, by John Pomfret, b. 1667, d. 1702; which is said both by Johnson and by Southey to be the most popular poem in the language. Perhaps in your uncle's youth it was not yet quite forgotten.

'Your uncle or his source has left out the fatal verses which interfered with the author's advancement in the Church and incidentally led to his catching smallpox and dying. And, after all, the poor man *had* a wife.'

And he added some missing verses which follow after the fourteenth line:

And as I near approach'd the Verge of Life,
Some kind Relation (for I'd have no Wife)
Should take upon him all my worldly Care,
Whilst I did for a better State prepare.

How many other men would have known that there were missing lines? But he did not supply the 'fatal verses'. In their context they were certainly amusing—and, perhaps, damaging to the chances of ecclesiastical preferment.

In this month of March the S.S. *Sussex* went down in the Channel, and as there had been talk of my wife and myself crossing at about that time, Housman writes on March 28:

'I am assuming that you either were not on the *Sussex*, or are one of the rescued.

'I enclose a list of the papers and persons to whom I wish copies of Manilius III to be sent.'

His letter crossed one of mine to him. He had been talking

of going to France himself and I asked whether the fate of the *Sussex* did not affect his plans:

' . . . The sinking of the *Sussex* is no deterrent to me; quite the reverse. I argue thus: only a certain number of steamers are destined to sink; one of that number has sunk already without me on board; and that diminishes by one the number of my chances of destruction. But women cannot reason, so I suppose your designs are knocked on the head.

'I have pretty well made up my mind to go at least as far as Paris, probably about April 20th.'

Then I actually remonstrated with him about the risk of the crossing. He writes on April 6:

'Many thanks for your letter and your wish to preserve my life; but I have just applied for leave to go through Folkestone and Dieppe by the 7.0 p.m. from Charing Cross on Wednesday the 19th. After all, a quick death is better than a slow journey; and as I am only an author and not a publisher I am comparatively well prepared to meet my God. But I shall be sorry if my choice of the shorter route spoils any chance I may have had of crossing in your company. I shall pretty certainly be in London the Monday before I go, and may perhaps see you then.

'I shall be interested to read my new volume of poems, but you don't tell me who the publisher is. By the way, when are you going to bring out my edition of *Catullus*? Clement Shorter announced it on your behalf ten years ago.'¹

The last paragraph bears on some fresh rumour of a successor to *A Shropshire Lad* that I had passed on to him.

He writes again about his journey on April 9:

'Last year you proved so much better informed than Cooks and Consulates that I am prepared to accept whatever you say; but the Military Permit Office has just written to me: "I am unable to state definitely by which route you will be allowed to proceed, as alterations are at present taking place."

¹ See p. 65. But I think, as Clement Shorter was not a 'Non-conformist minister', Housman must have been confusing him with his friend, Dr. Robertson Nicoll.

'Many thanks for your invitation to Bigfrith, but I think I had better hold myself free from engagements, as I have several things to do before I go.

'I don't know whether you sent copies of Manilius III to the list of persons and papers I gave you; but, if so, some of them at any rate have not reached their destination.'

On April 15:

'Not on account of mines or torpedoes, which I despise as much as ever, but because the Folkestone route is closed and the voyage by Southampton-Havre, without the solace and protection of your company, is a long and weary subtraction from the short holiday I meant to take, I am not going to France.

'Many thanks for the present of Valpy's Manilius from you and your relatives. I had the edition already, but not so neat a copy.'

The second paragraph is in acknowledgement of a Manilius from my uncle's library.

On May 15:

'Will you come here for some week-end this term, which ends June 12? As I have to lecture on Mondays, I shall not be absent any week-end, and all would suit me alike.'

I suppose this letter was kept back or that it followed me about, for I have to be reminded on June 12:

'The first observation I have to make is that you have not answered my last letter. Your secretary wrote to me on May 17 that she had sent it after you to the continent, and added "it will be some days before you can hear from him". And so it was.

'I asked you to come here for a week-end during the May term. The term is now over, but there will still be a certain number of people here, and if you like to come I shall be pleased to have you.

'I don't know when you go to Cornwall, but I don't think you will carry me off there before the end of July, because this is my chief time for work.

'I shall be interested to hear of your experiences of travel,

because toward the end of August I think of trying to get to France, if not Italy.'

At this time I asked definitely whether he would not come during the summer to spend a week or two with us at our cottage at Ruan Minor, a village near The Lizard. On June 26 he writes:

'I ought of course to have answered your letter before now. Your invitation is very attractive, and I should like to come, so far as I can judge at present. I have never been into Cornwall except just across the Tamar.¹

'From what I hear it seems as if the advance on our front were to begin to-morrow. Civilians are not to cross to France for the next three weeks or so, and all vessels crossing for some time back have been filled with big guns, even to the exclusion, except at fixed dates, of officers on leave.'

And then on July 6 he writes:

'I should think the 4th would be better than the 5th of August for travelling, with the double Bank Holiday looming ahead; so if you will make arrangements on that hypothesis it will be very nice of you.

'As to how long I should stay, which we have not fixed, the first and great point of course is that my stay falls entirely within your own, and I am not going to be left unprotected among your huge family in a remote corner of England.

'Thanks for the newspaper extracts.'

And then the visit is settled in a note of July 23, 1916:

'Many thanks for your letter and its directions, which I will follow on August 4. My idea is to stay about a week, if that will suit you.

'I am glad to see, from a fly-leaf I received the other day, that they are getting up a memorial to your uncle at Wadham.'

The College did produce a memorial—a small drawing which hangs, or did hang, in the Library. And he had been a considerable benefactor to Wadham—in more ways than one.

¹ See p. 159.

XVI

A VISIT TO THE LIZARD

IT was not such a small party that Housman came to join in Cornwall, although in another sense most of its members were very small parties indeed. My wife, my aunt Mrs. Grant Allen, and five children, a nurse and maids, all, with the exception of my aunt, crowded into a small and ancient cottage, which, however, had many rooms, some of which had been converted from their original uses as hay-loft and cowshed. There was a local tradition that one of its recent tenants had been a really ancient man, a miser, who lived by himself except for his pigs. One day, when he was very ill, the pigs had set upon him and eaten him up. That, however, was two score of years, or many more, before the Housman visit. No ghosts disturbed our days or nights, although we often talked of the hoard of gold that the old man was said to have amassed and to have hidden in the walls. The eldest of the children was sixteen, the youngest eight: they included a boy at Eton and a cadet at Dartmouth. There was also a not well-bred terrier. Certainly, if it were true that Housman did not take kindly to the society of women, did not like children, and had no affection for animals, he would have shown signs of discomfort. It was a fact that he seemed to enjoy all the incidents of what was in many ways a children's holiday, only showing signs of impatience when he found himself involved in some infantile larking or boisterous horse-play. The cottage was called Caerleon; it looked on to the Channel; it was equidistant from Cadgwith and Ruan Minor and it was two miles east of The Lizard.

At picnics Housman was unusually cheerful, scrambling down to the remoter coves as if he were again an under-

graduate, watching the rest of us bathe with amused eyes or going off on a stroll of his own. When it came to the actual picnic, he ate the simple food that was put before him with evident pleasure and appetite, and constituted himself the guardian of the very cheap *vin gris* that I had ordered down from Victor Richard. It was he who immediately upon arrival on the beach thought of immersing the as yet uncorked bottles in a shallow where, although they would be washed by waves and kept from the heat of the sun, they would not be greatly buffeted. And his eyes would be everywhere. I remember once at Polbarrow one of the children, Gioia, greatly daring, had climbed higher than was safe on the cliff-side. First of us all he had realized that she was in some danger and had dashed off to her rescue in a climb that, in bare feet, involved him in no little discomfort. He was indeed a delightful guest, and with my wife, some thirty-one years younger than himself, he was always at home, talking to her for hours, then and on other visits, of the problems of the War—that she was a Hungarian made its ebb and flow very bitter to her—of my work, of the future of the children, of all the things in which a girl brought up in Vienna and Paris might be expected to take an interest. And he would talk to the old lady who was my aunt about her husband and his books, and to the children about their amusements and interests, with equal readiness.

Nor did he ever seem to want to do anything other than what we provided for him in a modest programme of long walks, scrambles, a single motor drive to Helston (where we sampled the local beer at the brewery and saw the process of its making) and by Penzance round the Land's End to St. Ives. He was never stiff either physically or mentally, never, if his manner was any test, bored, hardly ever remote, never dry. Yes, he kept his distance, but whatever



A E H AT CAERLEON, RUAN MINOR.
1916



W. N. Sullivan

Grant Richards

A.E.H.

AT BIGFRITH, COOKHAM DEAN

he said or did he retained his charm of manner. To our regret, he went away on the day appointed. His plans were never elastic. I know that he enjoyed this unusual holiday, but that it would not have suited him to remain longer away from his usual life and interests, from his books and his own desk, or the attractions of near-solitude, architecture, and well-balanced meals.

One incident may be recorded. Vipers infested both the cottage garden and the rocky outcrop and hedges of the fields that surrounded it. We saw them often. They did us no harm. But one day Housman and I and the children came across one on the path from Caerleon to Kildown. It was of size, and we were upon it, almost treading on it where it lay in the sunlight, before we saw it. Instead of gliding off into the high grass it made as if to turn on us and hissed as if about to spring. For a matter of seconds the children with their almost bare feet and legs were in some danger. Housman was on it in a flash. Three blows of his stick and it was dead—and with so much energy had he attacked that the stick was broken. I think he had his full share of the countryman's dislike of adders. Rowland Ward stuffed that viper for me and it is near me as I write.

It was only a few weeks after Housman left us that my eldest son, Gerard, was killed at Poldu by the sudden falling in of the roof of a sand-cave that other children had dug out and had left to become more and more insecure with the first approaches of autumn. Housman wrote a letter of sympathy on September 13, 1916:

'I was very much distressed, and not on your account only, to see poor Gerard's death in the Times. He was a nice boy, and it is sad that he had not the health and strength of other boys. I hope you and Mrs. Richards are well, and not more overcome by sorrow for his loss than must needs be.'

Housman was under some misapprehension in thinking that the boy lacked health and strength.

On October 4 a new edition of *A Shropshire Lad* had reached him at Cambridge:

'Thanks for the copy of *A Shropshire Lad*; but I wonder why the printer, when directed to remove a comma from the end of a verse on p. 49, turned it upside down and added it at the beginning.'

And on October 16 he writes to welcome my wife and me to Cambridge. We were to make a bookselling tour through a darkened England and Scotland and were to start at Cambridge:

'I shall be delighted to see you both at lunch on the 31st. Let me know whether it shall be 1.45 or 2 o'clock.

'Thanks for the note from the printers. If they are guiltless, their predecessors seem to have been extraordinarily wicked.'

And on October 23:

'I am grateful though ashamed to receive your present of a new stick. The old one perished nobly in the destruction of a venomous serpent, and I only hope the new one may make as good an end.

'1.45 on Tuesday the 31st let it be. My kind regards to Mrs. Richards and the family.'

On November 6 one of the many composers wants to make a gramophone record of a song and the firm of music publishers writes for permission: 'They can make their record if they like: all I want is not to have to write letters.'

On November 7 a letter of some commercial importance:

'I hope you and Mrs. Richards enjoyed your tour—or are enjoying it, as I don't know if you are back yet.

'But what I am writing about is this. A friend of mine (and acquaintance of yours) went to Bowes and Bowes to-day and asked for a 6d. copy of *A Shropshire Lad*. They brought it, but charged him 1/- for it, saying it had gone up to this owing to

the war. I said I thought probably they were out of 6d. copies and offered him a 1/- one instead, but he sticks to his story.'

Evidently I had, to meet the extra cost of paper, printing, and binding, put up the price of the small *Shropshire Lad* without telling him, or asking his permission beforehand. Very remiss of me! He returns to the subject on December 5, 1916:

'It would have given me great pleasure to come and see you and Mrs. Richards, but I am engaged to spend the week-end in London, if the Government allows me to travel at all.

'Your Hunhunter at Clare, from your account, must have troubles enough without adding me; and I for the last three weeks have been having a series of three colds on the top of one another. But if you like to let me know his name and rank, perhaps I may try to make his acquaintance when I am better.

'I do not make any particular complaint about your doubling the price of my book, but of course it diminishes the sale and therefore diminishes my chances of the advertisement to which I am always looking forward: a soldier is to receive a bullet in the breast, and it is to be turned aside from his heart by a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* which he is carrying there. Hitherto it is only the Bible that has performed this trick.'

My 'Hunhunter' was one of my authors, Captain Desmond Young, who had recently produced, in collaboration with Justin McKenna, a young artist of great charm and much promise who perished in the war, an amusing book, *The Hun Hunters*. Young is now Editor of the *Pioneer* of India.

¹ Mrs. Symons tells me that A.E.H. did hear of a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* stained by a soldier's blood. Among his papers he had kept the letter of an American who had looked after a wounded British soldier in France after the War and wrote to tell him about it. One day the American took *A Shropshire Lad* to the wounded man. The man smiled and took from under his pillow a copy of his own, all tattered, torn and blood-stained. It had been in his pocket through the War from 1914, and he had written in it three other Housman poems. Which poems, I wonder, could those have been. 'Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries' must almost certainly have been one of them.

XVII

1917

I HAVE already drawn attention to Housman's honest frankness where the absence of American copyright in *A Shropshire Lad* was concerned. On January 11, 1917, he again stresses this point:

'Will you tell the lady that I do not give permission to print my poems in anthologies, but remind her that in America I neither possess nor claim any control in the matter.'

On January 14 it appears that his wish to be a member of the Trinity Wine Committee had been gratified:

'Thanks for the cheque for which I enclose receipt.

'There must also be some account to be regulated between us about Manilius III. I sent you £50 on account, but the production probably cost more. But I see you say you have only got out accounts to the end of 1915.

'When I last saw you, you made a light and easily-forgotten promise to let me know the average sale of *A Shropshire Lad* of late years.

'When I was in London on New Year's Day, I was not my own master. I was discharging an important mission, testing wines in company with other members of the Wine Committee of this College.'

In February, at the suggestion of my sister, I asked Housman if he could think of some phrase from a Greek or Latin author to put on Herbert Richards's tombstone, a few words which would indicate something of his character. I had already looked at that poem of Pomfret's which had been found among my uncle's papers.¹ He replied on February 25:

'It is one of several proofs that I am suffering from confinement in these islands mentally as well as physically, that though

¹ p. 146.

I have turned over a good many pages and thought about the matter from time to time, I have not got hold of any sentence that will hit off your uncle.

'Many thanks for the Nevinson, though I will not pretend that I am sufficiently educated to appreciate it properly.'

The 'Nevinson' to which he refers was the large coloured plate, 'Reliefs at Dawn', by C. R. W. Nevinson¹ which, so much admiring the original, I had reproduced, in the mistaken belief that I might conveniently add the publication of a series of reproductions in colour of modern paintings to my other activities. The rules and conditions that govern that particular trade, however, were too strict for a new-comer with very limited capital to break in with success.

Housman expresses appreciation (on March 4, 1917) of another of my publications, E. S. P. Haynes's *The Decline of Liberty in England*: 'Yes, I have read Haynes' book, and thought it very well written and full of good sense'. And on March 18 he writes that he will come to us for the week-end of Friday, the 23rd. On that occasion he was given some photographs of himself that my wife had taken: 'I think I can just make myself out in the marine landscape with figures.'

On June 20 we come back to Vaughan Williams:

'Vaughan Williams did have an interview with me six years or more ago, and induced me by appeals ad misericordiam to

¹ C. R. W. Nevinson's father, H. W. Nevinson, has summed up the qualities of Housman's poetry in his contribution to the Housman Memorial Number of the *Mark Twain Quarterly*: 'In his brief and exquisite verses he dwelt upon the transient joys and sorrows of all the human race . . . the changing loves, the fleeting triumphs, the restraints of the laws whether of God or man, the irony of battle, the short-lived beauty of girls and cherry blossoms and daffodils, the impenetrable indifference of all nature to the sorrows or joys of this man or of that. The mystery of earth's irresponsive beauty, and of all our loving passions flitting irrevocably past as we journey to the cold darkness of the earth . . . that was still the poet's theme in his last poems as in his first.' The *Mark Twain Quarterly* makes Mr. Nevinson say 'short-loved' in the above passage, but I am satisfied that he wrote 'short-lived'.

let him print words on the programme of a concert for which he had already made arrangements; but the permission applied to that concert only. I knew what the results would be, and told him so.'

On August 22 he replies to a letter in which I had asked him for information about a village in Dorset which he had praised:

'Symondsbury¹ was the village I spoke of, but I have never been inside it, and have only seen the beauty of its knolls and trees from the top of a neighbouring hill. It is two miles from the sea, and not in sight of it, as the high hill and cliff of Eype, which you see from Lyme, intervene. When you do get to the beach, I expect it is chiefly pebbles. I know nothing about lodgings, and I don't think there can be much of an inn.

'Abbotsbury is not a bad place for downs and open country, but as for bathing—it is on the Chesil Bank, where death is certain owing to the currents and desirable owing to the stones.

'The War Office does not view with favour my proposed escape to France, so I shall start at the beginning of next month on a tour to Rochester, Chichester, Winchester and Salisbury. When I am turning home I will write to you, and if you then wish me to come to Bigfrith I shall be very pleased. I hope you are all well.'

On October 14 he tells me that he has 'sent the book to Secker, and called on Mr. Withers, who seems an agreeable man'. The book sent to Martin Secker at my request was a signed copy of *A Shropshire Lad*. The 'Mr. Withers' to whom he refers is Dr. Percy Withers who, going on war work for a while to Cambridge, had asked me for a letter of introduction to Housman, whose book he so much admired. It was Percy Withers who wrote so interesting an article on Housman in the *New Statesman* immediately after his death. Withers, 'more venturesome in inquiry', to use his own words, must have asked Housman direct questions

¹ Housman's uncle, J. B. Housman, held his first curacy at Symondsbury, and married one of the rector's daughters.

that other of his friends could not help wishing, but were too nervous, to ask. Anyhow, he elicited replies that justified his temerity! His article appears in this book as an appendix.

The year ends with a note which, although I suppress the name of the wine merchant, is amusing:

‘... — sent me their lists, and I ordered three sorts (including some dry Tokay, as I remembered a very agreeable wine you used to have); and for two of the three they sent me what I had not ordered.’

As the proof of this chapter leaves me finally for the printer Dr. Percy Withers's *A Buried Life: Personal Recollections of A. E. Housman* appears. Reading in it hastily, I feel I may make two comments. (i) Dr. Withers is wrong in assuming—for no particular reason—that A.E.H. never visited the Cornish coast (see p. 26 of *A Buried Life*); and, more seriously, his sentence, ‘Housman, in the most intimate talk we ever had, told me of a lady recently dead, and in the telling his voice faltered and a look of unutterable sadness suffused his face’, has no parallel, no approach to a parallel, in my experience—nor in that of my wife, who had many solitary talks with him. It is true that, less venturesome in inquiry, less actively curious in fact, I never thought of going out of my way to disturb the depths or to invite confidences, and perhaps my nature does not attract intimacies of the kind of which Dr. Withers writes; but it is certainly true that neither my wife nor I ever saw any signs of such mental disturbance as described in the sentence I have quoted. Nor did we experience the sight of ‘a face wrought and flushed with torment, a figure tense and bolt upright as though in an extremity of controlling pain or anger, or both’—to quote a sentence not from *A Buried Life* but from Dr. Withers's kindly contribution to this book (Appendix I). Annoyance, yes; bad temper of a kind, yes, now and again; anger, very occasionally, as when I asked him about the O.M.—but agony, torment, no, never.

XVIII

THE WAR ENDS

THE last year of the War, 1918, found Housman busy but not, apparently, very greatly preoccupied. He lived his life as if there were no war, as far, that is to say, as he found such a course possible. On February 28 he writes to thank me for Gilbert Carman's *Noel*, 'though I have only found time to read a few pages yet'. On April 19 he thanks me for having written to him during March from the Continent: 'I did not answer because I had nothing particular to say'; and on June 4, having been warned by me that the price of *A Shropshire Lad* must once more be increased (owing to the cost of labour and material), this time to eighteenpence, he answers that 'the working classes at any rate can well afford to pay 1/6, though I don't know if 5,000 of them will want to. I am not likely to come to town, so far as I can see.' Five thousand was the number that I was proposing to print. On June 14 he deals with the question whether he should allow one of the poems from *A Shropshire Lad* to be printed, apart from the others, in a Braille anthology: 'I suppose I must follow the example of the anonymous great poet (very likely Alfred Noyes) and relax the rule, in order that the poem may be read by blind soldiers.'

No other letter till October 11, when he has been asked to come to Cookham Dean:

'I shall be very pleased to come to you on the 25th, when your woodlands ought to be looking very well. I was in Gloucestershire most of September, and saw the Rothensteins. From the fragment of your autobiography¹ which I see in the

¹ One of the weekly advertisements that I contributed to *The Times Literary Supplement*—advertisements in which I sometimes allowed myself to say where I was and what I had been doing.

weekly press I gather that you too have had a holiday or holidays.

'My kind regards to Mrs. Richards, who owes me a photograph of young pigs.'¹

But he was to lunch with me beforehand and he had been told the name of his fellow guest at Bigfrith: 'I shall be delighted to meet Squire,² some of whose poems I have read and whose paper [*The New Statesman*] I take in.' We did lunch and proceeded to Bigfrith together, but little I saw either of him or of Squire for suddenly I fell ill of influenza, which developed into pleurisy and then pneumonia. On November 14 Housman writes to my wife:

'I am very sorry to hear of Grant's relapse. I had gathered from the weekly bulletin in the Times Supplement that he was all right again; and I hope now it will not be long before he is well. I have escaped hitherto, and I have not heard that Mr. Squire has been attacked; and I hope that you will not catch it from the patient.'

And on November 25 to me:

'Yours is a terrible long illness, but I am glad that you seem to be fairly comfortable.

'I have sent to your office a list of 8 mistakes in the 8vo edition of "A Shropshire Lad", probably all taken over from 1916. The smaller editions (except the cursed "Lesser³ Classics") have a purer text, with only one error I think; but this reappears in the last issue (for which by the way I ought to have begun by thanking you): p. 5 (only the 5 is invisible), last line but two, there should be a colon after *town*.'

1918 was a thin year for me as far as Housman correspondence was concerned!

¹ Housman had on his Cornish holiday been photographed with a litter of young pigs by my wife in the neighbourhood of Zennor. This is one of the photographs referred to on p. 157; another is reproduced here and faces p. 152.

² Now Sir John.

³ An error: it should be 'Smaller'.

XIX

1919

HOUSMAN's preference for spending his holidays in France did not, it seems, become easier to gratify with the end of the War. There was some talk of our going together to France at the end of the January term. It came to nothing. He writes on January 27, 1919:

'I shall be in London, fulfilling various engagements, on Thursday, and could call on you about 12 if you would like me to. But I have nothing particular to say to you, and I don't wish to interfere with your serious pursuits.

'The paper I got from Bedford Square¹ is a very daunting document, and I don't see how I can come to France with you in March.'

The matter remained in abeyance, and on February 8 he writes to ask me if I had 'ever heard of Mitchell Kennerley. I gather he is an American publisher who publishes *A Shropshire Lad*. If so, I should rather like a copy of his edition, if you can get hold of one for me.' Of course I had heard of Mitchell Kennerley. He was the American publisher to whom I had sold several hundred copies of one of my early printings of the book, a publisher who had, at the beginning of his career, worked in John Lane's office in London, an Englishman, a friend of mine, the first publisher in New York to put money into John Masefield and D. H. Lawrence, and who had made a small fortune out of Victoria Cross. Publishing is, unfortunately for young authors, no longer his chief interest. The fact that the book was handled by one of his old employees must have added to John Lane's resentment, for, as I have said, he always

¹ The French Consulate General.

wanted it himself. I must have told Housman about Kennerley at the time that I sent the books to New York: anyhow, on February 13 he says: 'I am much obliged by your letter of the 11th which gives me all the information I require. I do not want a copy of Mr. Mitchell Kennerley's edition.'

By March 1 the idea of Housman's going to France had for the time faded:

'It is exceedingly good of you to interest yourself in my behalf and write to me in such detail, but I don't much think I shall take advantage of it at present, or before June, as I have appalling accounts of the prices of everything in Paris, and even accommodation seems to be scarce. I hope you and Mrs. Richards are having good weather at Nice and enjoying yourselves as much as I did when I was there with you. Please remember me to Belfort Bax.'

On April 8 he has arranged to come to Bigfrith on April 25 and to give me lunch in London on that day.

Ever punctual in his bread-and-butter letters, he writes to my wife on April 28:

'As I did not catch my first train at Liverpool Street, the daffodil was rather languid when it reached Cambridge but is now reviving in water. In the crowd at Praed Street I was not able to take a proper farewell of Grant when I got into the train so please make my apologies to him; and remember that I shall hope to see both of you here in the last week of May or the first of June.'

But the suggestion he there makes has to be corrected:

'I think that in writing to Mrs. Richards I mentioned the first week of June as one in which you might find it pleasant to be here. I must now warn you against it, for there will not be a bed to be had in the place. The rowing authorities have stupidly put the races earlier than usual, at a time in the term when men have not finished their examinations and begun to go down; so there is much trouble ahead for this already congested town and university.'

And the subsequent arrangement has to be altered. It appears that I had suggested that he should meet us overnight at Newmarket, where I had from William Allison, a Balliol man and 'The Special Commissioner' of the *Sportsman*, introductions which would ensure our being taken out and seeing, under experienced guidance, the horses at exercise—a thing which I had done once before in the nineties. Given a really fine day and a readiness to wake betimes, a more beautiful sight of its kind is not to be enjoyed than the Heath in the sunshine and slight mist of a May morning, with the horses trotting, cantering, or fully extended. Housman writes on May 15:

'The dinner of the inter-University club "The Arcades" is to take place at Oxford on the 31st, so I shall then be there, but I hope you will not be much put out by coming here on the 24th instead. I hope you will both lunch in my rooms on the Saturday and Sunday, and of course I should like you to dine in hall on Saturday, if Mrs. Richards will not cry her eyes out at being deserted. I do not admire that demoralising animal the horse as much as you do, so I shall let you do your gloating at Newmarket alone. Will you let me know exactly what time to expect you on Saturday? Perhaps I could get Quiller-Couch to meet you at lunch.

'The best inn here on the whole is the University Arms, and the most pleasantly situated: its drawback is that it is more than half-a-mile from the College, nearly half-way to the station. — is nearly central and stands on the best street in the town, but it is dingy, and the food not very good, at least when I tried it last. The best for food is the Lion, which also is central, but stands on a narrow and busy street. A smaller inn, the Blue Boar, close to Trinity, is well spoken of.

'The place is looking beautiful at present, and I hope this weather will hold. I am reading Wilfrid Blunt¹ with a good deal of interest.

'With kind regards to Mrs. Richards.'

¹ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's *My Diaries*.

On June 6 he writes:

‘. . . It is extremely good of you to have taken so much trouble to get me *The Young Visitors*, which I have begun to read, and have come to a delicious passage about a Sinister Son of Queen Victoria. Also I am glad to have Oldmeadow’s article, which I had missed.

‘On the 11th I am going away, probably for a month. I shall not try to get abroad till late in August.’

On July 15 a letter to my wife:

‘On returning here after a month’s holiday I found awaiting me the screens which you have been kind enough to make for my reading-lamp and candles. They beautify my surroundings very much, and I am very grateful to you for your skill and amiability.

‘I hope you and Grant are well.’

On July 21 Housman, who had the habit, as will have been seen, of making his plans and his arrangements well beforehand, writes:

‘. . . I am afraid we are not likely to travel together nor even to meet. I took a month’s change at midsummer, which I was much in need of, and now I have settled down to work: and also I rather think that August heat in France might put my health out of order again. So I am thinking of starting on Aug. 28 or perhaps Sept. 2.

‘As it appears that a military permit is still required for Paris I should be glad if you could tell me whether your friend is still in power and prepared to make things easy for me. Moreover I am not clear whether, after leaving Paris for the South, one can re-enter it without further trouble.

‘Most likely I shall not stay long at Brive or any other place, but motor about. After my sacrifices for my country during the war I am beginning to spend money on myself instead of saving it up for the Welsh miners.

‘Please keep me informed of your plans, and let me know when you come back, as I ought to have the text and notes of Manilius IV ready before I go, and they may as well be printing while I am away.

‘I hope you will all enjoy yourselves.’

On July 23:

'Thanks for your note.

'As the post now goes to Germany, will you please send copies of my Manilius book III to the six addresses enclosed? Though I observe that one is in Austria, which probably is still out of bounds.'

A letter of August 21:

'You are my guardian angel. I enclose my passport, which I only received yesterday, together with two extra photographs (as Cook says that is the proper number) and postal order for 8/-, in order that you may try to get me the French visa. The day I intend to cross is Sept. 2. I am glad you are back safe and I hope you enjoyed yourself all right.'

There are, however, still difficulties in the way. He writes on August 24:

'Your office has very kindly and dexterously secured me the French visa, but unluckily it is for Boulogne, whereas I am going by Dieppe. I ought to have mentioned this particular, but I did not think of it. I do not know if the Consulate is like Pontius Pilate and refuses to alter what it has written; but in the hope that this is not so I am again enclosing the passport, if I can ask you to try to get it amended. As this is Sunday and there are no postal orders about, I enclose a 10/- note, in case it is wanted.

'I shall have to come to town some day this week; and if there is any day (other than Saturday) on which you could lunch with me at the Café Royal, I wish you would let me know what day it is, and would also engage a table there in my name.'

And again on August 25:

'Not knowing you were in Cornwall, I wrote to you yesterday to ask you to lunch with me in town some day this week; but that must be for another time.

'There was nothing in my former letter that it was necessary for you to see. I said that you were my guardian angel, which I may now repeat. Your information will be useful to me whether I am obliged to go by Boulogne, or whether I go by

Dieppe as I had intended. The passport has been visé for the former route, and I don't know if that can be altered, though I have sent it back to you at your office on the chance. I have engaged a room at the Terminus Hotel St Lazare.

'The text and notes of Manilius IV will be ready for printing by the end of this week. Shall I send them to your office?

'I hope you and your family have enjoyed and are enjoying yourselves.'

And on August 29:

'I have sent Manilius IV to your office. I leave here on Monday morning, and down to the next Sunday I expect to be at Hotel Terminus St Lazare; after that, letters addressed to me at Cambridge will be forwarded from time to time.

'I am going by Dieppe because the hotel is at the Paris station of that line. Besides, I crossed with you from Folkestone to Dieppe without discomfort,—though that may have been due to your magic presence. The visa has been put right.

'It would certainly be very agreeable to stay a couple of nights at Bigfrith on my way home, if nothing intervenes. I expect to come back about the 25th.

'P.S. This vol. of Manilius, apart from the rise in prices, is likely to be more expensive than I or II (let alone III, which was short), because it contains a larger proportion of notes, which are I suppose the most expensive part.'

On September 14 he is at Brive:

'If you do not intervene to prevent it, what will happen is this. On Wednesday the 24th I shall arrive at Bigfrith some time in the afternoon, in a motor which will deposit me with a small bag, containing little except a clean shirt, and will take my larger luggage on to Cambridge, and there you will have me for two nights.

'I am returning to Paris, Hotel Terminus St Lazare, on Thursday the 18th. There I shall be till Tuesday the 23rd, when I shall cross, and sleep at Newhaven. I should like to hear from you as soon as I reach Paris, because I shall have to write to Cambridge about the motor.

'The passage of the Channel was as good as could be.'

But I am after all to see him before his return to England,

for unexpectedly I have business in Paris. He writes on September 19:

‘This is a great pleasure, apart from its unexpectedness. It will be no good looking for me here this evening, and I am also engaged to-morrow evening and Monday evening: otherwise I have no tie. Usually I leave the hotel not long after 9 a.m., and to-morrow I will look you up at the Normandy soon after that time, unless I hear from you to the contrary.’

Then, having returned to England and having been to Bigfrith, he writes on September 27:

‘. . . Whether I shall post this letter to-day is uncertain, as I had better wait to see what effect the strike has on the post. My *New Statesman* arrived this morning as usual.

‘I began to read *Antonio*¹ in the train and found it quite interesting.

‘I hope neither you nor Mrs. Richards are suffering much from the cold you caught from me, which lies heavy on my conscience, as I do not like to return evil for so much kindness.’

Housman was an admirer—even, for some time at least, a great admirer—of Marcel Proust’s work, and, reading reviews of his books and hearing much talk about them, I asked Housman whether I should be wise in attempting to secure the English-language rights. Here is his reply:

‘I have not finished Proust’s book, but I have read enough to form the opinion that an English translation would not sell, and, apart from that, could not be really satisfactory, as the merit of the French is in great part a matter of diction and vocabulary. Moreover, the 2nd section of the book, in which I am now rather stuck, is not at all equal to the first. The 2nd volume, I am told, is not good.’

Experience would, I believe, lead the one or two publishers who tried translations of Proust on the English public—even such translations as those of C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Stephen Hudson—to endorse Housman’s opinion.

¹ Ernest Oldmeadow’s novel—his best novel, may I say? It deals with Portugal and the wine trade.

I must have returned to my desire to get Housman to Newmarket. This time it was to a race-meeting—in the Cambridgeshire week, to be exact. I myself was going with a view to getting material for a novel, *Double Life*. He writes on October 28:

'I do not feel very like coming to Newmarket, and I ought to attend a meeting on Thursday afternoon for which 4.18 would be too late. Moreover I do not think I gave the promise you speak of, unless I was more drunk than I remember being.

'As you are returning the same day, I suppose it is no use offering you any hospitality, and I am afraid I could not find you a bed in College at short notice in our present state of over-population; but if you stayed the night in the town I should be very glad to have you as my guest at dinner.

'In any case I hope that Newmarket will yield what you want from it.'

I had written to offer to send Housman a book by André Simon, and to ask whether he would let me have a copy of the poem he had written with his own hand for the manuscript volume that a number of writers had presented to Thomas Hardy. He replies on November 7:

'If you give me Simon's book it will be very good of you. I enclose the poem. The poems were not supposed to be *addressed* to Hardy, only specimens of our stuff, published or unpublished.'

The next letter—November 30—deals in its third paragraph with Simon's book:

'I had thought of 6/- net as the price for Manilius IV. Of course the increase in the cost of production is greater than that, but I have always sold at less than cost price, so it does not make the difference between profit and loss.

'This reminds me that it is just 3 months since I sent you the manuscript, and I wonder when the printers are going to start upon it.

'Thanks for the book on wines: but mortal passions have invaded the sacred precincts of the cellar to such an extent that

he (André Simon) knows of no German or Hungarian wine and does know of stuff from Australia and California.¹

Then, in answer to a suggestion of mine that his earlier Latin books should have a shilling or so added to their price so that all would cost the same, a postcard on December 2:

'No; Manilius I, II, III and Juvenal should be sold at the old price.

'If it is now possible to improve the binding of Manil. III and make it correspond with I and II, that should be done.

'The blind may have *A Shropshire Lad* in Braille.'

And another on December 10:

'I suppose I ought to congratulate you on having at last sold off your pet edition.² So far as I remember, the text was correct.'

On December 16 quite a bitter letter in which that poor illustrated edition is once more belaboured:

'This is molestation and persecution. You sent me the proofs to correct when the edition was preparing, and when you do that there are practically no errors. I am too full at this moment of more interesting work to waste my time trying to find mistakes where none are likely to be. Besides, I have a copy of the edition, probably more than one.

'If you do not like illustrations, why did you print this edition? It was all your doing, none of mine; and I thought the public quite right in not buying it.'

My wife seems to have softened his wrath with gifts; he writes to her almost immediately:

'Many thanks for your gift of walnuts and deliciously scented

¹ The omissions to which Housman refers were hardly André Simon's fault. His publisher was responsible. 'Theodore Cook published in *Land and Water* a series of articles on all and sundry wines, which I wrote for him before the War', Simon told me; 'when it was over, Gerald Duckworth asked me for a book on wine; I told him that I had no time to do it, but that he could have those wine articles, including of course those on German wines and Hungarian. It was he who decided that he would leave out Germany and Hungary!'

² He refers to the Hyde edition, as he does in his next letter.

apples. I am glad to see that your garden has prospered and that the children of the neighbourhood have not taken all the fruit. We are looking forward to the winter without much fear, as the Government has just allowed the College a good coal ration. Tell Grant that I am eating and drinking a great deal, as there are many Feasts of one sort and another.'

And so ended 1919.

XX

MANILIUS IV, HOUSMAN'S FIRST FLIGHT AND MOMENTOUS NEWS

THE New Year, 1920, begins with preoccupations about Manilius. Here is the first letter, from Cambridge, of January 2:

'The instalment of Manilius which I received yesterday consisted of 8 slips; but with them came not only the corresponding 46 pages of MS, but also 10 more pages of MS with no slips to correspond. So now I expect there will be a long pause, and when the printers are asked about it they will say they are held up by having unfortunately mislaid pp. 47-56 of the author's MS. Or possibly there are 2 slips more which they have omitted to send.

'As to your note about the binding, that does not matter very much, but I hope the sort of paper on which the book is printed is still to be had.

'A happy new year to you and all your family.'

On January 21 he sends his uncompromising comment on a translation into French of some of his poems. He makes no bones about saying what he thinks: 'The translation is literal, as he claims for it, except where it is a mistranslation, as it now and then is; and it is not affected or pretentious. But it is a very commonplace affair, and both the diction and the verse are poor.' On March 3 a protest equally laconic: 'It is a fortnight since I have received any proofs of Manilius IV, though you told me that the printers promised you to send the whole book in proof at the beginning of December.'

He writes on March 19:

'I am sorry you found Italy so bad: some one, I forget who, told me the passport was the only trouble and things were all right when you got there. I hope you were not too early for

the celebrated plenty of rare flowers in Capri. When I was there it was autumn and they were all gone to seed. I stayed at the Hotel Eden at Anacapri, and found it quite satisfactory; but you probably stuck to the lower town at this season.

'In a day or two I will send the corrected proofs of the text and notes of Manilius IV, and those of the preface shortly after.'

And, as always, he is as good as his word. On March 21:

'I enclose corrected proofs of the entire text and notes of Manilius IV: I shall be obliged if you will acknowledge receipt. The preface shall follow in a few days.

'In making additions and subtractions I have taken considerable pains to bring the added or subtracted matter to such measurement that no rearrangement of lines, or only the very slightest, will be needed in the surrounding parts. It might be well to call the attention of the printers to this, that they may not hastily make more change than is necessary.

'I think I had better see a revise of the notes before they and the text are made up into pages together.'

And on April 14:

'I enclose corrected revise of the notes to Manilius IV.

'These may now be made up into pages with the text. In doing this, care should be taken that every note *begins* on the page containing the line of text to which it refers. This is not absolutely necessary provided that the page containing the line of text and the page containing the beginning of the note are pages both of which lie before the reader's eyes at the same time; but every effort should be made to avoid having the line of text on one side of a leaf and the beginning of the note on the other.¹

'The preface also may now be put into pages; and I enclose the MS of a page to face the first page of text and notes. I think it ought to be possible to print this so that the word INTERPOLATOR comes out more clearly than it does in some copies of books II and III.'

In asking Housman to stop with us in the spring I always

¹ It is interesting to compare the letter with that of December 10, 1911. Housman spared no pains to get his instructions carried out and to make them clear.

had it in mind to arrange if it were possible that he should come for the flowering of the cherry, Cookham Dean being famous for its cherry orchards. He was now to come to us on the fourteenth of May, so the cherry blossom would have gone, but, as he reminds me on May 10: 'The bad weather of these last weeks has kept back the trees so perhaps the hawthorn will not be over in Berkshire.' More than anyone I have known—unless it were Grant Allen—Housman kept an eager and knowledgeable eye on the orderly procession of the seasons. But all the cherry blossom and hawthorn in Berkshire was not to move him from the necessity of receiving his Manilius proofs in a proper state. He writes on May 24:

'I enclose the MS of the Index to Manilius IV and of a page to be inserted before it. This completes the book.

'But I am perplexed and disquieted by certain phenomena in the paged proofs of the text and notes. New errors have been introduced in places which were previously correct. Two of these (p. 3 l. 4 of notes and p. 113 l. 18 of notes) have been put right again by the proof-reader; but I have noticed others (p. 114 line 5 from bottom, 61 for 861; line 2 from bottom, *Virgo* for *Virgo*), and I do not know how many more there may be. As for preventing letters at the beginning and end of lines from getting out of their place, it seems a hopeless business: as fast as they are put straight in one place they fly crooked in another.'

On July 14 he remarks: 'As you are generously disposed to give me a copy of Saintsbury's cellar book,¹ I certainly shall be grateful for it.' What Housman thought of George Saintsbury as a critic of literature I do not know, but he had some respect for him as a judge of wine, and I can well remember that when in 1927 we travelled together in Burgundy, he took great trouble to run down a Montrachet—Montrachet Aîné—of which Saintsbury had boasted in his

¹ *Notes on a Cellar-Book*. By George Saintsbury. London. 1920.

book. We searched for it in vain, and English authorities thereafter assured us that it was a mythical wine existing only in the Professor's imagination although I did, later on, find evidence in support of Saintsbury's accuracy. 'Poor, poor George Saintsbury!' Housman said when he heard that the critic was living in retirement at Bath and had been cut off all wine by his medical advisers.

On August 15 he is again going abroad, this time by air:

'I am very grateful for the leaflets. I am most attracted by the Aircraft Transport people because theirs is more explicit, and by mentioning a charge for "Passengers' Excess Baggage" they give me hope of disappointing your malevolent expectations about difficulty arising from the weight of my bag. You should not always insist on carrying it.

'Do you still possess backstairs influence at the French consulate? Last year you relieved me of the trouble of having to appear in person to get my visa, and I don't yet know if Cook and Son can.'

And he writes again on the same subject on August 17:

'Cook professes himself able to get me a Visa, so I will not trespass on your kindness. The Visa of last year was for 2 months.

'My inclination to go by Air Express is confirmed by the crash they had yesterday, which will make them careful in the immediate future. Their cars start from your neighbourhood, the Victory Hotel,¹ Leicester Square, so I shall try to get a bed there for the night, unless you warn me against it.'

In that week an amusing thing happened to me, a sequel to an episode which had been very irritating and very expensive. I had on January 24, 1919² published a book, partly biographical, on George Meredith, by S. M. Ellis, a cousin

¹ This hotel no longer exists.

² Housman's opinion of Meredith, at least in 1903, was that he was a 'galvanized corpse . . . he hath been dead twenty years'. That would bring the living Meredith back to the days before *Diana of the Crossways*. See *A.E.H.*, p. 168.

of the novelist. It was a book that, attracted by an article by Ellis in the *Fortnightly Review* I had commissioned, and indeed suggested. Ellis assured me that it had the sanction of William Meredith, the novelist's son and the head, or almost head, of Messrs. Constable, the publishers. I noticed, when the manuscript arrived, that it contained a good deal of quotation from the letters and the work of the novelist, but in the circumstances I had no misgivings. However, no sooner was the book published than William Meredith and his fellow trustees—John Morley was one of them—threatened an injunction. Apparently I had not, legally, a leg to stand on: Ellis, as I say, had assured me that he had asked for and had obtained William Meredith's permission, but when it came to a 'show-down' it appeared that the permission given was conditional—conditional, among other things, on the proofs being shown to William Meredith. All the same, I dare say we should not have heard anything about that if a morning paper had not come out on the day of the book's publication with a flaring article, 'George Meredith a Super-Snob: His Father a Tailor', or something of the kind. Anyhow, the threatened lawsuit was based on the fact that, quoting so liberally, Ellis as author and I as his publisher had infringed the law of copyright. I might have fought the case but my legal advisers urged discretion and I withdrew the book at a cost of some hundreds of pounds. On hearing about this Housman became indignant, his sympathy being entirely with me and with Ellis, and he even suggested starting a subscription to fight the case in the interests of literary justice.

Shortly afterwards, I learnt that Messrs. Constable had themselves published a book by James Agate, whose novel, *Responsibility* I had published, and who was no stranger to me, and for whose work I had, and have, a lively admiration. It was a volume of essays and at the head of one of

them appeared, as a text, so to speak, the whole of one of the poems from *A Shropshire Lad*, about whose appearance separately I have shown Housman to be so jealous. I reported the matter to Housman, adding that the offenders were the firm of which William Meredith was a head and asking whether I might 'get some of my own back'. On August 21 he replied:

'Revenge is a valuable passion, and the only sure pillar on which justice rests, so I do not want to hinder your pursuit of Constable if it can be conducted without making me seem to be the pursuer. But have you also a vendetta against James Agate? From reading your serial in the Literary Supplement I supposed that he was one of your pets.

'I shall stay at the Victory Hotel on the night of Wednesday Sept. 8, and I shall be delighted if you will dine with me that evening. As I shall have no dress clothes, but only a dark grey or brown¹ suit, you had better select, from your superior knowledge of London, the best restaurant where that costume would not be conspicuous. Not that I really much mind public reprobation if you do not.'

With Housman's support I had of course a perfect case. Messrs. Constable did not deal with the matter themselves. They sent Agate to see me. After all, the expense and trouble of withdrawing his book would fall on him more than on them. He came, and went away half an hour later with a letter to Messrs. Constable in his pocket, a letter which said that I quite understood how the offence had been committed and that in the circumstances I would not think of making trouble. Great fun, that, I thought!

September 8, the day on which Housman invites me to dinner, happened to be the birthday of my son Charles, and in accepting I asked whether, as I did not like to leave him on that day, I might bring him too. We dined at Housman's favourite Café Royal, the three of us, and I remember that

¹ I never saw him in a brown suit.

we had two admirable grouse and that I saw with greedy regret a half of the second go back to the kitchen. We also had lashings of caviare, but as a savoury instead of as an introduction to the meal. The Café Royal did not mind about the dress clothes: few restaurants did in the years immediately succeeding the War.

The next letter—of September 5—written as a matter of fact before that dinner, was momentous:

‘ . . . About the probable date of publication of Manilius IV, the probable strike in the binding trade, the inevitable shipwreck of the vessel which conveys it from Glasgow to London, we can talk when we meet; but I want to put in writing for your convenience that on its publication I think it ought to be advertised once at least both in the *Classical Review* and the *Classical Quarterly*, as the other day I discovered that a scholar here, and a friend of mine, did not know that book III had yet appeared.¹

‘ Suppose I produced a new volume of poetry, in what part of the year ought it to be published, and how long would it take after the MS left my hands?’

But at the dinner itself I was even more preoccupied with the fact that my friend was going to fly to Paris. He had never flown before;² I had never flown. I was nervous. Passenger flying was in its infancy. I made him promise that he would relieve my anxiety at the earliest possible moment. A postcard from Paris, dated the next day, the

¹ See p. 65.

² Cyril Clemens in the Housman Memorial Number of *Mark Twain Quarterly* (Winter 1936) comes a sad cropper over this question of Housman flying. Describing a dinner at Trinity in August, 1930 he says: ‘Aeroplanes were the first topic mentioned. After saying that he had never been up in one and had no desire to, Housman recalled . . .’ Where Clemens got this idea I do not know, but the odd thing is that the chapter in which this sentence appears was, he says, ‘read over and corrected by Housman himself so that every statement made has his approval’ and Clemens quotes corrections that Housman did make. Actually by August, 1930 Housman must have flown to and from France dozens of times.

day of his arrival, says simply: 'All right. A. E. Housman.' Thereafter he nearly always travelled to and from France by air, and it used to be said of him in Cambridge that he was more proud of having travelled so many times by aeroplane than he was of being Kennedy Professor or of having written *A Shropshire Lad*. But that, of course, was before nearly everyone had given aeroplanes a trial.

It happened that I followed Housman to Paris after the passage of a week. But he was not having a good time. On the thirteenth of September, from the Hôtel Continental, when he did not expect me, he writes:

'I have decided to come home on Friday morning, and this, if I remember your plans correctly, will prevent me from having the pleasure of meeting you here.

'At this instant I am suffering much from indigestion, whether chiefly due to myself or to Montagné, Traiteur, I do not know.'

It was I who had recommended him to go to the restaurant of Prosper Montagné in the rue de l'Échelle, and when I arrived in Paris I was desolated to discover that he was still suffering not a little from symptoms that suggested ptomaine poisoning. Accidents will happen even in the best kitchens, but I have too good an opinion of Montagné's establishment to take it for granted that it was the source of the trouble. Montagné was the last of the *traiteurs* of his generation. The place no longer exists.

The next letter is of September 16, from the same hotel:

'I am very glad we can meet after all.

'At 2.30 a newly married couple are going to make a short call on me here, but otherwise I am not engaged in the afternoon. I will come to the Normandy at 1 o'clock and wait a little: if you find this letter without me, that will mean that I have gone for my lunch. I shall be in this hotel at 3 o'clock, but do not think this an engagement.

'I could dine with you if you are willing to dine early and lightly: that is to say, I shall dine lightly; there is no reason why

you should. I should have to leave you soon after 8.30, but the nearer I was to a station on the Vincennes-Maillot line of the Metropolitan, the longer I could sit at table. If we don't meet at 3, I shall be here from 6 to 7.15.'

Manilius IV has appeared by September 22, when Housman writes: 'Again the label on the back has been stuck on upside down, as in the first copies of book III four years ago.' Of course when the title is printed sideways on a spine-label it should read from the foot of the book to the top. Too many publishers and binders unversed in tradition are ignorant of this rule.

The *Bookman*, in late September 1920, asked me for a photograph or other portrait of Housman to reproduce.

He writes on September 28:

'Oh, damn the Bookman. The author wrote to me some months ago, asking for private particulars and I thought that my reply had chilled him off. I have not been photographed, I think, since 1894: that was the year when I was beginning to write *A Shropshire Lad*, and if for that reason they would care to have it, I could send you one, as I do not want to seem churlish. As to Rothenstein, his portraits are of 15 years ago, and one of them, the one he shows in exhibitions, is a venomous libel, to which he adds fresh strokes whenever he feels nasty. This is full face; the other one, more side face, he reserves for his private delectation.

'Now I think of it, I was photographed by Hoppé, also about 15 years ago, and I think I rather lately received a copy for the first time; but I do not know what I have done with it.'

And in the event he sends, on September 30, two prints: 'The signed copy is for you, the other for the *Bookman*.'

On November 19 he is spending a week-end at Bigfrith, but, as lesser men have done, he misses his train and has to telegraph from Cambridge that after all he will meet me at Paddington.

It was in this year, 1920, that Joseph Thorp, who had a

kind of lien on the work of Lovat Fraser, the painter, illustrator, and decorator, had suggested that Lovat Fraser should try his hand on an illustrated, or decorated, *Shropshire Lad*. I thought it a good idea that he should experiment, and Housman gave his reluctant approval. The designs turned up, and on December 20 Housman writes to me:

'I return Lovat Fraser's designs most of which I do not like at all, though the landscapes are generally pleasing. The trouble with book illustrators, as with composers who set poems to music, is not merely that they are completely wrapped up in their own art and their precious selves, and regard the author merely as a peg to hang things on, but that they seem to have less than the ordinary human allowance of sense and feeling.

'To transpose into the 18th century a book which begins with Queen Victoria's jubilee is the act of a rhinoceros. I should look a fool if I allowed the book to appear with these decorations.

'This reminds me. I am told that composers in some cases have mutilated my poems,—that Vaughan Williams cut two verses out of *Is my team ploughing* (I wonder how he would like me to cut two bars out of his music),¹ and that a lady whose name I forget has set one verse of *The New Mistress*, omitting the others. So I am afraid I must ask you, when giving consent to composers, to exact the condition that these pranks are not to be played.

'... I was not annoyed by the paragraph² for undeserved renown is what I chiefly prize. I am much more celebrated in Cambridge for having flown to France and back last September than for anything else I have done.

'I don't think [Arthur] Machen ought to drink port on the top of burgundy.'

With the letter is a schedule of detailed comment:

'X . . . Poem on March illustrated by tree in full leaf.
IV . . . Early morning light very good.

¹ See p. 221.

² A provincial paragraph declaring that as a gourmet and judge of wine, Housman had no English peer.

- XX . . . What on earth is this? I recognize a water-lily,
but nothing else.
- XLI . . . Not an illustration.
- XLVIII . . . Not an illustration; and no illustration is possible.
- XL . . . Good in itself, but not distant enough to be an
illustration.
- XXXVIII . . . Very good.
- XXXII . . . No illustration: none possible.
- XLV . . . Pretty, but hardly appropriate.
- XVIII . . . Lunatic at large.
- XXIV . . . No illustration.
- LI . . . Fancy selecting a *mutilated* statue!
- XXXIX . . . Hybrid between broom and hawthorn, I sup-
pose: much unlike either.
- II . . . What a cherry-tree!
- LII . . . The poem is about black poplars growing by
pools and whispering at night when there is
no wind. The illustration displays Lombardy
poplars in broad day and a furious gale: no
water anywhere about, except suspended as
vapour in a cloud.
- XXXVII . . . One of my friends at farm-work, keeping my
head from harm by wearing enormous boots.
- XLII . . . Good.
- XLIII . . . Good enough.
- XXI . . . Bredon Hillock.
- XXII . . . The soldier was not so much astonished and
horrified as all that.
- XIII . . . How like an artist to think that the speaker is
a woman!
- XVII . . . What a weed! No wonder he was unfortunate
in love.
- XLIX . . . Satyr dressed up as John Bull: allegory, I sup-
pose: quite inappropriate.
- L . . . Good.
- LV . . . Good in itself.
- XI . . . A broad joke.

- XXX . . . Poem contrasting the passions of youth and the unwholesome excitement of adultery with the quiet and indifference of death, illustrated by figure of obese old man: possibly the injured husband.
- LXIII . . . Pretty, but because I call them stars he makes them bells.
- IX Fancy stringing *two* chaps to the gallows!
- XXVI . . . What an aspen!'

As illustrations or decorations to *A Shropshire Lad* nothing came of Lovat Fraser's work, but, later, it was reproduced in a little book under the auspices of the First Edition Club.

1920, then, is interesting to the Housman admirer for the fact that it is the year in which he first flew, the year in which he first suggests a companion to *A Shropshire Lad*, and the year of the publication of *Manilius IV*.

XXI

CHRISTMAS FROLIC (1921)

I HAVE shown that on September 5, 1920, Housman wrote me a momentous letter in which he did more than suggest the possibility of 'a new volume of poetry'. I answered him but, knowing my poet, I did not immediately begin to worry him about the almost promised manuscript. When, however, the New Year, 1921, began, I did not think it improper or precipitate to ask him if he was likely to be ready for the coming season, since, if there was any chance of its being a spring book, it was important that my country traveller should start selling it to the book-sellers from the moment that he began his spring journey. If he was not to hear of it till March or April, then, with half his journey completed, he would miss many sales. My proper curiosity, my natural hope, were, however, immediately damped. Here is Housman's letter of January 5, 1921:

"My new book" does not exist, and possibly never may. Neither your traveller nor anybody else must be told that it is even contemplated. What I asked you was a question inspired by an unusually bright and sanguine mood, which has not at present been justified.

'I saw E. B. Osborn's remarks, but they did not alter my opinion of him.'

I have quite forgotten what was the opinion that Housman had of Osborn. And, naturally, I 'shut up' about the possible book of new poems.

On February 25 he is planning to go abroad again and asks me to send him Grant Allen's *Umbrian Towns* and *Smaller Tuscan Towns*, 'as I expect to be going there these holidays'. Thanking me for the books on February 28 he

remarks that 'they are more elaborate than I knew'. On March 2 he will allow Mr. Ireland 'to set to music all the poems he wishes, but he must not print No. 50 as a motto; nor No. 40, which is what he means'. And immediately thereafter, on March 20, he writes in answer to a suggestion from Mr. Ireland that there will be some money earned by the gramophone records of the songs:

'I do not want revenue from gramophone and mechanical rights, and Mr. Ireland is welcome to as much of it as his publisher will let him have. I hope it may be sufficient to console him for not being allowed to print the poem he wants.'

Followed a letter of May 18 dealing with a foreign review:

'The number of the Dutch *Museum*, containing a review of Manilius IV, which you have just sent me,—was it sent to you spontaneously by the publisher (as I rather gather from the word *Bewijdsnummer* stamped upon it), or was it procured for you by some agency which you employ to collect reviews? And do the publishers of *Museum* generally send you a copy when it contains a review of a book published by you? (But I suppose it seldom does, being a classical periodical).'

Apparently I did not answer, for he writes on June 28:

'I am motoring to Eton on Saturday, and as you are, so to speak, in the neighbourhood, and spend that day at home, I was wondering if I might drop in for lunch, as I am not wanted at Eton before tea-time.

'I wrote you a letter more than a month ago, with questions about foreign reviews of my Manilius, to which you have not condescended to reply.

'My kindest regards to Mrs. Richards.'

I must have been complaining of my health in July for he writes on July 21:

'I am very sorry to hear the tale of all your unmerited troubles; though "lassitude and inertia" are my normal condition, especially in this weather. I hope you will not worry yourself about anything connected with me.

'I have been away from Cambridge a great deal since the beginning of June, and I now am settling down to work. I am obliged to be here at the beginning of August for a meeting of the Classical Association, damn it: I am not a member, but they have chosen to meet here, and Americans are coming, and I am the only classical professor of Cambridge who is able to deliver an address. If I go away later in the month it will be to meet some of my family at Monmouth. I intend to go to Paris for a week about September 10, and if that is about the time when you would be going to fetch Mrs. Richards back, of course I should like to go with you. I would not insist on your flying, as I could face land and sea with you for courier.'

Then on August 21, from Monmouth:

'My present intention is to fly to Paris on Sept. 8 and stay there a week. But if you are thinking of going there at anything like the same date, I would rather travel with you, even if you went by land and water instead of air, if it were agreeable to you. I shall not begin taking steps to secure passage by aeroplane till I return to Cambridge, which will be on next Friday. I hope your health is all right or improving.'

And on August 26:

'Thanks for your letter, which I have just found here; but you do not say whether, on the 8th or 9th Sept., you would or would not travel by air. My intention is to go to Paris, and I not only must notify the Air Service people in good time but also must send more short notice to my friends and acquaintances there. I mean to stay there a week, and I have taken so much holiday and done so little work in this vacation that I do not think I shall prolong the time. St. Malo would be interesting, but too far; Boulogne not interesting, nor probably Dieppe. My kind regards to Mrs. Richards.'

And again on September 1:

'As I did not hear from you by Tuesday evening, I wrote and secured passage to Paris by the Messageries Aériennes on the morning of the 8th. I wrote you a letter last Friday to the Hotel Normandy, which apparently you did not get, to say that Paris was my only objective and that I had already taken

more than my due of holiday in the country, so that St. Malo etc. would not suit me; and this naturally applies to Jersey. I am sorry it could not be managed, and I hope you will get a holiday which will do you good.

'I expect to be at the Hôtel Continental, and stay a week.'

He has returned to Trinity by September 16:

'I suppose you are back from Jersey. In the first place I must thank you for Tahiti,¹ which in my postcard I forgot to do. Secondly, Winstanley,² whom you have met here, and I are coming to London some day next week, *not Friday*, to see Max Beerbohm's things at the Leicester Gallery and lunch at the Café Royal at 1 o'clock; and I wish you would join us, at least at lunch, and let me know in good time what day will suit you best.'

And he is in high spirits on September 27, although at this length of time I cannot recall who it was proposed to visit him:

'Tell him that the wish to include a glimpse of my personality in a literary article is low, unworthy, and American. Tell him that some men are more interesting than their books but my book is more interesting than its man. Tell him that Frank Harris found me rude and Wilfrid Blunt found me dull.³ Tell him anything else that you think will put him off. Of course if he did nevertheless persist in coming to see me I should not turn him out, as I only do that to newspaper reporters.'

On December 10 he writes to my wife accepting an invitation for Christmas:

'Many thanks for your kind invitation, which I am delighted to accept. If I may come to you on Friday the 23rd and stay till the Tuesday, that will suit me excellently. I hope to find you all well.'

¹ George Calderon's book of that name.

² Denis Arthur Winstanley, now Vice-Master of Trinity College, Cambridge; at that time Tutor of the same college.

³ p. 105.

But on December 16 he says he will not make a longer stay:

‘It is very kind of you to ask me to stay longer, and I should not be averse from meeting Robert Lynd; but it would upset arrangements which I have made, and would consequently interfere with my comfort, to which I am much attached; so I will pray you to have me excused.

‘On Friday I would travel with you to Cookham, if that would suit you.’

And in coming he decides, on December 19, ‘on general grounds of propriety to bring a dress suit’, and also says that he ‘ought to have thanked’ me ‘before for Norman Douglas’s book’.

That Christmas of 1921 at Bigfrith, specially notable it seems to me because of Housman’s presence, was quiet enough. Mrs. Grant Allen, whom he was always glad to see, was there, and one other guest, Otto Mundy, a Wadham man, then—and now—of the Board of Customs and Excise. It had snowed; the ground was white, and two or three hours before dinner-time at the actual Christmas feast, which in our case (in the Hungarian manner) took place on Christmas Eve instead of Christmas Day itself, I carried some champagne into the garden and laid it on the snow that it might be brought to a fitting temperature. There were nine or ten of us at table, but of these several were children and Housman and I did not care for champagne if other wine was to be had. Through the early part of the meal we were unexpectedly occupied with the necessity of listening to very bad carol-singers, who had been calling at the house on and off for at least a month and had on each occasion been sent away with the suggestion that if they must inflict their unpractised voices on us they had better do so on the right day, and that *then* they would be rewarded. It was therefore my duty to go out to them; I gave them much more than their deserts. Immediately they

dispersed, without even finishing the carol on which they were engaged. Then, at the right moment, I hurried once more through the garden door to bring in the champagne that we might drink the healths of absent friends, and so on.

But I could not find the champagne!

It had disappeared.

It was clear that the carol-singers had taken it.

Other bottles had immediately to be found, and indignation tempered with amusement governed our mood while we waited. (It was lucky that I had other bottles for, unlike that great-hearted publisher, Andrew Chatto, I did not keep a cellar of champagne!)

And while we waited Housman, taking a pencil, prepared a notice which we arranged that one of us should that very evening place on the notice-board at the little Cookham Dean Police Station and, in duplicate, in the porch of the church. The notice read:

‘The carol-singers who, after being paid for their carol-singing at Bigfrith on Christmas Eve, removed a bottle of champagne which had been placed in the garden to cool, are requested to return the empty bottle and the cork.’

and the only thing I can say about its wording seventeen years after the event is that even with few of us liking champagne, one bottle seemed a too careful ration! The whole thing at the time seemed a modest frolic—and after all we did have a grievance!

The vicar, however, and the other ecclesiastical authority did not see the matter in that light. In the morning of Christmas Day a letter arrived by hand from the Rev. Herbert F. Hunt, of Cookham Dean Vicarage, Maidenhead, beginning ‘Dear Mr. Grant Richards’:

‘I think that before sending me the notice which I have just received it would have been advisable for you to find out what party of carol-singers visited your house—*Certainly none con-*

nected with this church as it is now some years since our choir was strong enough in numbers to do anything of this kind—and no effort has been made this year to go round.’

and, later, the churchwarden added his protests. We left it at that except to write to the vicar to point out that within comparatively recent years the church porch was deemed throughout England to be the proper place to put up respectable secular notices of matters connected with the parish, and that even to-day in Guernsey, for instance, the fact that a farmer was going to kill a pig was considered information suitable for exhibition on outside walls of the sacred edifice. We thought we scored, especially as we added something about it surely being one of the pleasant duties of the local ecclesiastical authorities to train a suitable choir!

Nothing to be proud of, of course, but one is light-hearted at Christmas!

On December 28 Housman had returned to Trinity, whence he wrote to my wife:

‘There is nothing in to-day’s *Times* about the great Cookham and Maidenhead match, but I hope you had the pleasure of watching a glorious victory, and that Charles and Geoffrey particularly distinguished themselves. I got safely home, very much the better for my Christmas under your roof. A happy new year. . . .’

the allusion being to a local ‘rugger’ match between Maidenhead and Cookham, my son Charles, recently a naval cadet, having been largely instrumental in getting up a Cookham ‘Rugger’ Club.

And the year 1921 came to an end.

XXII

AT LAST A SUCCESSOR TO *A SHROPSHIRE LAD!*

I HAVE no Housman papers of 1922 dated earlier than April, when on the 3rd he says:

'Thanks to you, I believe I possess Machen's complete works. He is always interesting (except in the Evening News) and to some extent good. Mixing up religion and sexuality is not a thing I am fond of, and in this book the Welsh element rather annoys me. The imitation of Rabelais is very clever.

'I knew already, having been told, that it is wrong to have one's wine brought in a cradle, and now I know further that it is wrong to decant it; so in future I shall just have the cork drawn, and suck the liquid out of the bottle through a tube.'

On April 9 great news:

'It is now practically certain that I shall have a volume of poems ready for the autumn; so I wish you would take what steps are necessary as soon as they are necessary. But do not mention it to anyone until you are obliged to mention it.

'Perhaps you can tell me what my legal position is as regards a poem which I contributed in 1899 to the Academy.¹ They sent me a cheque, but I returned it: I don't know if that makes any difference.'

I was able to assure him that he had in no way compromised his copyright.

On April 18 he writes again:

'Thanks for your reply. The book will probably be rather shorter than *A Shropshire Lad*; and it had better have a wider page, or smaller print, or both, as there are more poems in it which have long lines.

'I desire particularly that the price should be moderate.

¹ This was 'Illic Jacet'. Its actual appearance in the *Academy* was on February 24, 1900.

'As to America, I much prefer that they should wait.

'What is the *latest* date for sending you the complete manuscript?'

It will be seen that this does both supplement and vary a little the account I gave in *Author Hunting* of the appearance of *Last Poems* on the horizon.

With April 22 the idea of the book begins to crystallize:

'The end of September, as far as I can judge, would suit me quite well for publication. The size of page should at any rate not be more than in the Riccardi edition,¹ if so much. The poems should not be run on, as originally in *A Shropshire Lad*, but each should start on a fresh page.

'If, as I rather gather from what you say, printers no longer print from MS, then I should be obliged if you did the type-writing, though it will not be more legible than the hand I write literature in.

'The Oxford Dictionary defines *reach* as "to stretch out continuously, to extend", and quotes "how high reacheth the house" (1526) and "the portico reaches along the whole front" (1687). Perhaps your friends are baffled by the subjunctive mood, and think it ought to be *reaches*; but see Psalm 138. 6 "Though the Lord *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly".

'When you next print *A Shropshire Lad* I want to make 2 alterations.'

The third paragraph is in answer to some inquiry I had passed on to Housman about the use of the word 'reach' in the line 'And straight though reach the track' in the *Shropshire Lad* poem which begins 'White in the moon the long road lies'.

In the meantime, with the assistance of the Riverside Press of Edinburgh, I have been busy at a specimen page for the new book when it came. He writes on April 30: 'The specimen page looks all right to my untutored eye', and,

¹ A reference to the Riccardi limited edition of *A Shropshire Lad* which Philip Lee Warner had induced me to permit. See p. 122.

regretting that all his week-ends are engaged, either at Trinity or elsewhere, for the next month or so, adds that 'even this late spring will not delay your cherry blossom till June'.

Housman had so strongly urged on me his wish that nothing should be said about the likelihood of a successor that year to *A Shropshire Lad*, that I was dismayed when the new book was more or less announced as a certainty in *John o' London's Weekly* at the beginning of May. I wrote to him quickly, assuring him that the leakage was not my fault or that of anyone with whom I was connected. He replied on May 9:

'There is no leakage: what has happened is merely that John o' London casually wrote a paragraph, completely false, about the early adventures of *A Shropshire Lad*, and this reminded a man whom I knew here as Lieut. Lee, and who now seems to have a job on the *Weekly Dispatch*, that I had let him have a poem for the *Blunderbuss* which he was editing.¹

'The only person besides you whom I have told is sure to be equally trustworthy, and is not in touch with journalists.

'The photograph is Oppé's [Hoppé] about 15 years ago I should think. It appeared in the *British Weekly* in an article which you had more to do with than I.'

On May 22 I have offered to procure for him the new Proust:

'I am very much touched by your solicitude for the corruption of my mind, and I eagerly expect the new Proust. I rather gather from your epistle to the world last Thursday that your Mr. Ronald Firbank is a bit in the same line. I never heard of Jean Cocteau, but I do know something of the Paris *bains de vapeur* (or *vapeurs* as Mr. Van Vechten says).

'I am flying to Paris (though not necessarily to these haunts of vice) on June 1 and I shall sleep in London the night before, Hotel Victoria, Northumberland Avenue; so perhaps we might manage to dine together.'

¹ See p. 206.

On May 25 he refuses to bind himself for a visit, or to meet me at Oundle, a school of which he vaguely approved and where I had a son, Geoffrey:

'It is possible that I might be back from Paris on June 9, but not at all sure, and I might find myself hampered if I made any promise, so I had better regretfully decline.

'Would you see about engaging a table at Verrey's at 7.30 on the 31st. I have hardly ever been there, but I suppose it is a place where one dines in comfort without dressing: anyhow I shall have no dress things with me.

'I am not at all likely to burst in on you at Oundle.'

The Proust books arrived and on May 26 he thanks me for them: 'The 3 volumes are the right ones, though the numeration outside is absurdly stupid. I am keeping them to read in France.' And he came, it is evident, very soon after, to stop at Cookham Dean, for he writes on June 12 to my wife:

'I am afraid I was even duller than usual, for I was not very well when I came to you; but I hope you will be pleased to hear that I think my stay at Bigfrith has set me right again.'

Then on June 15 he declares that in his belief *A Shropshire Lad* could not 'be well translated into French', and that he would 'not be able to judge whether the translation was even as good as it might be'. And he also remarks in the same letter on what had this time evidently been a leakage: 'I return Charles's [my son's] postcard. As it comes from University College, I think I can guess who has been indiscreet.'

We are now getting warmer. In another letter of this same date he writes:

'I cannot arrange the order of the poems satisfactorily until I know for certain which I shall include and which omit; and on that point, as I told you, I want to consult one or two people. Therefore I want the poems printed first simply according to

the various metres they are written in, not at all as they will afterwards stand. Will the transposition which will then have to be made before the book arrives at its proper form be very expensive? If so, perhaps type-writing had better be used, but I do not like it, as it makes things look repulsive.'

And on June 17 he writes to thank me for James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which he thought he might like to read, and for some of the books of Ronald Firbank.

On June 19 the manuscript which was to become *Last Poems* is sent to me:

'Herewith the manuscript, 50 pages. Please acknowledge receipt. After all, I do not think much transposition will be required.

'You must not do what you spoke of doing, preserve a copy of the book in its present state, as I value the opinion of posterity too much. When it is printed let *two* copies be sent to me at first, for correction. It will save the printers trouble if you tell them that they had better not try to improve my spelling and punctuation.'

The twentieth of June, 1922, was really a great day and yet there is not a word in my diary of daily happenings to show how important it was. Yes, the greatest moment in my life as a publisher was when I opened the sheaf of manuscript that was *Last Poems*, the manuscript that is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. I will go further and say that no publisher alive has had a greater thrill. *A Shropshire Lad* had been published in 1896; it came into my list in 1898, and it seems to me that there was never a week thereafter and seldom even a day that one person or another—sometimes a bookseller's 'collector', often some one whom I met at a party—did not ask me when it would have a successor. American publishers, as I have written, would often open their conversations with such an inquiry. My own curiosity on the subject was greater than that of

anyone else. But I soon learned not to give it rein. At the beginning, when I did ask, I was told that it was by no means certain that there would ever be a successor, even that it was unlikely. I came to the conclusion that it was a subject that I had better leave alone, but I felt sure in my own mind that if there were new poems I should hear of them as soon as, if not sooner than, anyone else. And yet I was not able altogether to avoid the subject, for now and again my travellers would bring me stories to the effect that booksellers had told them with conviction that a new book of poems was ready for the printer, perhaps even in the printer's hands. I would pass the stories on to Housman without comment. Of course there was no truth in them. And now that at length the manuscript of a new book had arrived I had but one regret: the title that Housman proposed to give it. I remonstrated. He replied that there was nothing in that title to make a volume of posthumous poems impossible, and there I had to leave it.

'I believe that the manuscript came into my hands on a Friday' I wrote in *Author Hunting*. Nothing of the sort. It arrived on a Tuesday, and it was on that night that, having gone home by an early train to Bigfrith, because of the importance of the occasion, I took with me the unopened packet that I might read the manuscript uninterrupted by callers or telephones. And there that evening, in the room in which Housman had so often sat, I cut the string and turned the pages. Then I did a thing I have never done before or since: I began to read poem after poem aloud to my wife and children. I will not attempt to describe the effect that the pages had on me. Here was the manuscript of a book for which I had been longing, and for which men and women of literary taste had been waiting, for more than a quarter of a century. What I personally thought of the contents of that parcel is of no importance,

Her strong enchantments failing,
Her ^{towers of fear} ~~monstrous~~ in wreck,
Her limbs, dried of poisons
-hid the knife at her neck,

The queen of air and darkness
Begins to shrill and cry,
"O young man, O my slayer,
To-morrow you shall die."

O Queen of air and darkness,
I think 'tis truth you say,
-but I shall die to-morrow;
But you will die to-day.

but I should like to say that to me, much as I loved *A Shropshire Lad*, this manuscript seemed to be, on the whole, finer, more important work and to include poems of greater beauty and distinction.

On the following day the packet went back to my office, then at 8 St. Martin's Street, and its contents were typewritten by my secretary, Miss Pauline Hemmerde, the typewritten sheets going at once to the Riverside Press. How either Housman or I could have thought of anything else at that time, I don't know, but it is certain that he had, at least at that moment, none of the usual excitement of an author, for on June 24 he sends me a postcard: 'I am returning *Ulysses*, which I have scrambled and waded through, and found one or two half-pages amusing. Firbank also is very unrewarding hitherto. But I am grateful to you all the same'; and on July 8 he writes in connexion with the fact that the *Tatler* had printed without permission part of one of the *Shropshire Lad* poems:

'I do not know what penalty the *Tatler* people have laid themselves open to, and anyhow I should think they had better be left alone. I am told that Vaughan Williams has mutilated another poem just as badly, to suit his precious music. Probably the sort of people who read the *Tatler* would not realise that anything was missing, or prefer the full text if they had it.

'The poem in italics is to stand facing p. 1, so I do not think the print is too small.'

The proofs of *Last Poems* had come quickly enough and I had drawn attention to the fact that the prefatory poem, 'We'll to the woods no more', was in my opinion in too small type, and there seemed no logic in his satisfaction with it. But, as one can see, his view prevailed.

On July 10 he writes to my wife: 'Thanks for the photographs. Though I do not forgive you for taking them, I am bound to say that your camera is not such a venomous

caricaturist as some that I have met'; and on the same day he writes to me:

'I enclose:

Proofs corrected

One MS piece for insertion

Directions for rearrangement

'When all this has been done please send me 4 copies. It is not yet to be put into regular pages.

'Remember that there is to be a vine-leaf at the end of each poem, except the introductory piece in italics.'

On July 12 he sends a note in answer to my asking him if he would like me to use a design for a wrapper which had been suggested for the small edition of *A Shropshire Lad*. 'I am no judge of this sort of thing, but there is nothing in the design which I much object to, except the portrait of a tramp sucking a stick.'

Six days later—on July 18—it appears that the fatality that seemed so often to attend Housman's proofs was to attend his requests in connexion with *Last Poems*: 'I asked for 4 sets of proofs, but have only received 2.'

On July 26 he tackles the question of proofs seriously:

'The correction of proofs will be held up for three weeks or so by the absence of W. P. Ker in Switzerland; so I write on details which I want to be clear about.

'What is the exact height of page available for containing printed matter? The p. 22 which I enclose is a specimen of the largest number of verses composing one poem which now stand on one page. Would the addition of the vine-leaf at the end exceed the measure, or involve diminishing the spaces between verse and verse? Would the further prefixing of a number or a title do so?

'The p. 2 which I enclose will probably be p. 1. That being so, does the poem begin too high up, and will one verse or more have to go over the page?

'I ask these questions because I want to be able to map out exactly what page each poem or part of a poem will stand on.

'What is the proper procedure about the agreement? Does

your solicitor draw it up and send it to my solicitor; or do you draw it up and I submit it to some Society for the Protection of Authors against Publishers?

'Thanks for Story's book on Paris restaurants,¹ which I have not yet had time to look at properly. I see a fair sprinkling of names unknown to me.'

By August 24 the proofs begin to satisfy Housman:

'I enclose corrected proofs, which can now be put into book form, as there will be little further change.

'Silence may now be broken, as I am safely away from Cambridge and out of humanity's reach. When you make the announcement in print I shall have to censor your fanfares. I should think the first had better be something quite short, such as—

"I shall publish on . . . the only book of poetry written by Mr. A. E. Housman since the appearance of *A Shropshire Lad* twenty-six years ago"

or perhaps better simply—

"Mr. A. E. Housman's second volume of poetry"—

'I shall be here, as I told you, till the 5th Sept., and then I shall be going into Gloucestershire for a week, not returning through London; so I shall be glad if you can pay me a day's visit here as you say.

'The printers, as usual, when making corrections seize the opportunity of introducing new errors.'

The first announcement to the book trade and to the public was not made till a month later, when this modest and brief statement appeared as the first three lines of what Housman has described as my 'autobiography' in *The Times Literary Supplement*:

8 St. Martin's Street, Sept. 21 (1922)

Early in October I shall publish a new book by A. E. Housman. It will be entitled *Last Poems* (5/-).

Only this and nothing more.

¹ *Paris à la Carte: Where the Frenchman Dines and How*, by Somerville Story. (London: 1922.)

The price of *Last Poems* was, it will be seen, exactly twice that of the first edition of *A Shropshire Lad*, and perhaps it was wrong of me. But for this book Housman did agree to being paid a royalty—fifteen per cent.—and it must be remembered that the cost of production had risen considerably since 1896 and that the book, though shorter, was of greater size. On the other hand, to be frank, the fact that I was printing a first edition of thousands instead of hundreds went to reduce the cost. The number of the first edition was four thousand. There was no special edition ‘numbered and signed by the author’. That was never even contemplated. I knew better than to suggest it to this author, who would have refused such an idea without a moment’s hesitation, however much money he and I might have made out of it. Indeed he aimed at an entirely different effect. The four thousand edition was decided on after I had, as far as possible, ascertained how many copies the booksellers would order and with the definite intention of preventing copies of the first edition going at once to a premium. I wanted, as I have said elsewhere, to make as certain as I could that everyone who was sufficiently intelligent could get a copy on the day of publication. My first intention, though, was to print five thousand. The booksellers discouraged me. Housman had suggested ten thousand. And ten thousand would have been better as by the end of the year the number printed had reached twenty-one thousand!

On September 5 Housman goes for a week to Woodchester (the scene of *The Story of Our Museum*)—‘to the 12th my address will be c/o Mrs. Yorke, Selsley Road, N. Woodchester, Stroud. As far as I know at present, I shall be glad to see you at Cambridge on the 14th.’ On the 16th he sends me a list of the ‘33 persons to whom I want copies [of *Last Poems*] sent’, thanks me for a book by Sacheverell Sitwell,

and adds that of his own book the 'wrapper should be as simple as possible: just white paper and letterpress'.

On September 20: 'I return the agreement signed; also the wrapper, which does not cause me any special disgust, as most wrappers do'; the next day: 'Well then, if you are a man of your word, send me the *Weekly Westminster Gazette*';¹ on September 23 he bade me 'remember that I have not yet seen the final proofs of the work'; and on the 26th: 'Please look at what I have written on pages 55 and 79'—but what he did write I do not recall.

On October 3 I am admonished:

'You must not print editions of *A Shropshire Lad* without letting me see the proofs. I have just been looking through the editions of 1918 and 1921, and in both I find the same set of blunders in punctuation and ordering of lines, some of which I have corrected again and again, and the filthy beasts of printers for ever introduce them anew.'

Then comes the question of the cover that *Last Poems* is to have: 'I return the three specimens. I do not like the red and I agree with Mrs. Richards that the dark blue is on the whole the best.'

Last Poems did actually appear on October 19. I asked Housman to dine with us in London on that day but he tells me on the 9th that 'the 19th would not be an available date, and a Monday or Wednesday would probably be best'. We did settle on October 21. In the meantime Bert Thomas wrote to ask me to procure a photograph of Housman to help him with a caricature, and on October 11 Housman writes: 'No, don't send Mr. Bert Thomas a photograph. One or two of his caricatures which I have seen I thought not bad.' Mr. Thomas must have managed to see Housman

¹ Difficult to reconcile with: 'I receive, though I do not wish to, the *Weekly Westminster* in which my verses are translated' in a letter to his sister of March, 26, 1923 (*A.E.H.*, p. 148)—except on the ground that the second sentence was written six months later. No doubt *A.E.H.* had forgotten.

in the flesh or to procure a photograph elsewhere, for a caricature did appear in *Punch* and its subject thought well of it. He wrote to Mrs. Symons about it on December 29, 1922: 'The artist in *Punch* is one Bert Thomas. He asked Grant Richards for a photograph, wh. I would not send, and I think he had to depend on one of Rothenstein's drawings of me.' Mrs. Symons wrote of the caricature that it was 'an excellent likeness . . . would serve as an apt illustration of him in his spirit of comedy'.

The next day, October 12, he sends an indictment of the printers:

'1. I knew the printers would do something, and I only wondered what it would be. On p. 52 they have removed a comma from the end of the first line and a semi-colon from the end of the second.

'2. Remember that I am not S. P. B. Mais, and do not quote reviews in your weekly epistle, when reviews begin to appear. Brag about the sale as much as you like.

'3. Please add to the list of those who are to have copies from the author sent them: W. T. Vesey, Esq., Caius College, Cambridge.'

On getting this letter I offered to do what I could to correct the error, but he writes on October 14: 'No, don't put in an errata slip. The blunder will probably enhance the value of the 1st edition in the eyes of bibliophiles, an idiotic class'; and on October 18, when I had procured some kind of explanation from the printer:

'I return the printers' letter. Printers seem to regard this sort of error as the act of God: I remember the same thing in several places in the Juvenal.

'I do not require any copies beyond the six I have.

'What the Times has done is what the Standard did in the case of Lord Beaconsfield's *Endymion*; and in some way which I do not understand it was supposed to have injured the sale.'

What *The Times* did was not without its advantage from



"CURIOSITIES OF LITERATURE."

The Muse. "OH, ALFRED, WE HAVE MISSED YOU! MY LAD! MY SHROPSHIRE LAD!"

Caricature by Bert Thomas which appeared in *Punch*, October 25, 1922, in connection with the publication of *Last Poems*.

By permission of Messrs. Bradbury, Agnew & Company.

a publisher's point of view: it reviewed *Last Poems* a day or so before it should have done, reviewed it before it was published, the literary editor having perhaps omitted to notice that on the slip sent, in accordance with custom, with the review copy, a request was made that no notice of the book should appear until October 19. The *Times* review no doubt helped to set the tone and to make it certain that the book would not be overlooked by any paper of importance—made a review necessary and promptitude essential.

The dinner to celebrate the appearance of *Last Poems* did not take place on my birthday, October 21, as I said in *Author Hunting*, but on November 13. Housman, writing on November 8, says: 'I would rather there were no one but you and Mrs. Richards.' For that dinner I put the Carlton on its mettle; we dined at 7.15, but the only other details of the evening that I can recall are a saddle of hare, for which Housman had a partiality, and the fact that he stayed at the Great Northern Hotel.

By October 26 we were already reprinting *Last Poems*: 'Thanks. The press-cutting agency sends me, with due delay, more notices than I want to see. What guarantee have I that all these editions of yours are being printed correctly?'

In these days my wife sends him a box of walnuts from our garden and he writes on October 29 to thank her for them:

'A heavy case has arrived, and I have had it opened and have come to the top layer, but have not eaten my way further down at present. I write now to thank you before I make myself ill. It seems that your garden has been doing its duty this year.'

And on the same day he has a flaw to find in the second edition of *Last Poems*:

'I return the proofs of the small edition of *A Shropshire Lad*,

which seem to need no corrections beyond those which have been marked.

'I have found no errors yet in the second impression of *Last Poems*, but it seems to me that the stanza on p. 56 ought to be leaded, or whatever you call it, in the same way as the two stanzas on p. 55.'

And on the 31st he wishes to make what appear to have been alterations: 'I have noted some more corrections. Perhaps that on p. 59 may not be feasible.'

On November 1 he sends me, signed, the American agreement for *Last Poems*, between Henry Holt and Company,¹ of New York, and himself; and on November 3 he writes: 'Do *not* at present put in hand the new edition of *A Shropshire Lad* which you speak of.'

Four days before the dinner of November 13 my wife had written asking him to come to us again to Bigfrith for Christmas, but he decides against domesticity. He writes on November 10 in reply:

'I hope to see you and your frock on Monday, but I am sorry I shall not be able to plunder your Christmas tree. We have a regular feast here, which last year I deserted for you, but this year I am expecting a guest of my own. Many thanks all the same.'

At the end of that month a letter arrives from America asking for some permission with regard to *A Shropshire Lad*, in which, as we have seen, Housman was always so anxious to make it clear that he claimed no American rights. On November 30 he tells me how to answer it:

'Mr. Vickers can have what he wants, and any of his countrymen. I am told that Americans are human beings, though appearances are against them.'

We sent him some sherry as a Christmas present—sherry from John Fothergill's cellar at The Spreadingeagle at Thame. On December 28 he acknowledges it:

¹ Who were, years later, to publish the *Collected Poems* in New York.

'The wine has arrived, and I am very grateful. There is a great amateur of sherry in this college, with whom I must sample it.

'I am prepared to receive royalty from America for the sale of *A Shropshire Lad*. I suppose it will be the same as for *Last Poems*.

'In the copies of the small *Shropshire Lad* which you sent me a few weeks ago the corrections I gave you have not been made. Is that the case with all the 5000 (or whatever it was) which you had printed lately?

'A happy new year to you and yours.'

Returning for a moment to Housman's reference quoted on p. 193 to the poem he had contributed to Lieutenant Lee's *Blunderbuss*, I may quote from Sir J. J. Thomson's *Recollections and Reflections* (p. 229):

'... some regiments were billeted in one of the courts of the College, but for by far the greater part of the time the College was filled with young men who had already joined the Army, and came to receive an intensive course of instruction, by lectures and by physical training, to qualify them to receive a commission. Some of them had already been at the Front as privates and had shown promise of making efficient officers. They were under the charge of a military staff. Besides their training, the cadets played football and cricket matches, had athletic sports and published an illustrated magazine, *The Blunderbuss*. This will live in history, as it was in it that Professor Housman, who was in residence, first published his well-known poem¹ beginning:

As I gird on for fighting
My sword upon my thigh,
I think on old ill fortunes
Of better men than I.'

¹ II in *Last Poems*.

XXIII

1923 and 1924

HOUSMAN is still spending his vacation at Trinity on January 10, 1923, when he writes: 'I suppose the Braille people may do *Last Poems* as they did the other book. The blind want cheering up.'

On January 18 he writes:

'Did you succeed in finding out Witter Bynner's address and send him a copy of *Last Poems*? I have a letter from him which reads as if he had not received one.

'I am told that the Brighter London Society are printing Lovat Fraser's illustrations to *A Shropshire Lad* on calendar covers.'

Witter Bynner, it will be remembered, was the poet who, being on the staff of *McClure's Magazine*, had printed therein poems from *A Shropshire Lad*.¹ He did receive his copy all right, but, as one can see from *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, he was a man who moved about a great deal in those large United States.

A note on February 14 is a little wayward: 'If I did lay it down (which I do not remember) that composers were not to give titles of their own to my poems, they have broken the rule often before now, and it is no good adhering to it'; and on May 4 he is almost angry with the *Weekly Westminster Gazette*:

'I wish, if you can, you would stop the Westminster (Saturday) setting poems of mine to be turned into Greek and Latin. They will soon have reprinted the whole volume. What makes it worse is that they award prizes to copies containing false quantities.

'My old, dear, and intimate friend Princess Marie Louise, who is furnishing the Queen's doll's-house, asked me some

¹ p. 24.

months ago to let 12 poems of mine be copied small to form one volume in the library; and I selected the 12 shortest and simplest and least likely to fatigue the attention of dolls or members of the illustrious House of Hanover. Now she says that there is to be printed a book describing or reproducing the contents of this library, and asks me to allow these poems to be included in it: and I have consented. So do not send a solicitor's letter to the Queen (for the book is to be hers) when it appears. The issue is to be 2000 copies in this country and 500 for America, and the Queen is to do what she likes with the proceeds. As I say, the poems are my shortest, and the 12 together are 96 lines.

'I have to thank you for sending me several things, including Mrs. [Annand] Taylor's book on the renaissance,¹ which I find I can read . . .

'I have been ill for two months, worse than I ever was in my life (though that may not be saying much), with carbuncles, which I never had before and do not want to have again. At last I am better, but it has ruined my Easter holiday.'

But by the end of the month he is better, for he writes to my wife on May 31 that he hopes to 'get to Bigfrith by 1 o'clock on Saturday'.

What the *Weekly Scotsman* did to call forth the next letter, that of July 24, is not now easily recoverable:

'This proceeding of the *Weekly Scotsman*, with its mutilation and misprint, is intolerable.

'As to the *Westminster*, it did, to my surprise, set a piece from *A Shropshire Lad* for translation a few weeks ago; and I thought perhaps your embargo had been confined to the other book. But I am told by those who read the paper that the translations have never appeared; so I suppose you have terrorised it somehow.

¹ *Aspects of the Italian Renaissance*. By Rachel Annand Taylor. London, 1923. It was Dr. Gilbert Murray who first drew Housman's attention to Mrs. Taylor's work—to her poetry rather than her prose, which had not then been published. She was a warm admirer of Housman's work. She wrote in her paper *The Post-War English Novel*, read to the Sociological Society in 1928, of 'the lyrical perfection of our only satisfying living poet'.

'I shall cross to Paris on the 31st by the Handley Page from Croydon at 4.30. I shall stay at the Continental for about 3 days, and then, I think, go by train to Le Mans and engage a car there, which will be cheaper than in Paris. My idea is to follow the south coast and come back by the north. Thanks for all your maps, books and other aids.

'If we are in Paris together, I probably should not be free in the evenings but should be during the day. I am afraid I cannot come up to town this week. The Poet Laureate [Robert Bridges] is paying me a visit on Thursday.

'I suppose I gave Christabel Marillier permission, but I forget, and it does not matter. Boosey have suddenly enriched me with £6 for gramophone rights,¹ Vaughan Williams I think. . . .

'I read through the Bookman you sent me a week or two ago, and it may have improved my mind, but I did not make out why you sent it.

'I hope you will keep your end up with Frank Harris.'

On October 31 my wife and I sailed for Quebec. I did not find that the fact that I was Housman's publisher cut very much ice with the Canadians in Montreal or Toronto (except with Professor Pelham Edgar), and as far as my experience goes no considerable number of copies went to either city. But it was very different in the United States, where, when I reached Chicago from Toronto, I gained the impression that *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems* would open any doors to me. It made no difference whether I was talking to Mrs. Hahner in Marshall Field's book department or was with the young poets and critics who clustered round Covici and McGee's book-store or was being shown the black quarter and introduced to Ben Hecht at the White Smoke, the name of Housman was sure to crop up. It was as Housman's publisher that I was generally introduced. The same thing happened in New York and Boston. The name of Housman was sufficient to ensure me a welcome.

¹ See p. 185.

On December 28 of the previous year, Housman had said that he would, after all, agree to receive from America a royalty on the sale of *A Shropshire Lad*. Henry Holt, who had become its 'authorized' publishers in that country, had raised the question. On January 23, 1923, they write to me, through Lincoln Macveagh, now American Ambassador to Turkey and at that time their literary adviser:

We have already sold a number of the last sheets you sold us, and are starting to set up our edition. Here is the contract in duplicate. I appreciate your remarks on the royalty. We shall gladly pay 15 per cent. I wish we could make it 20, but the circumstances are peculiar in regard to this book, as you know. Though our edition is now favored, there is no copyright to prevent someone else with good taste from beating us out, by hook or by crook. . . .'

Clause 3 of the contract in question is interesting:

'The author grants to the publishers the exclusive authorization to publish the above named work in book form in the United States of America. Should the law be changed so as to permit them to do so, the publishers shall take out copyright in that country. They shall copy the page arrangement, and type of the English edition, and shall devote particular care to preserving the punctuation and spelling of the author. The Publishers shall do their best to prevent any copies of their edition of *A Shropshire Lad* going into Canada.'¹

Holt apparently had the same trouble as I had with their printers, for in spite of their undertaking to 'devote particular care to preserving the punctuation and spelling of the author' Housman wrote in 1934 to Houston Martin, his American admirer: 'Even in the authorized edition by Holt there are disgraceful misprints.' When I read that sentence in the *Yale Review* my heart went out in sympathy to my American friends.

I am back in England before Christmas, 1923, but I have

¹ A trade question with which Housman had nothing to do.

no Housman records until March 14, 1924, when the anthology question turns up again:

'I have never laid down any general rule against the inclusion of poems from *Last Poems* in anthologies.

'The rule regarding *A Shropshire Lad* still holds good. It is true that the Poet Laureate has printed three poems from it in his recent anthology, but he does not pretend that I gave him permission to do so.'¹

This is followed on July 2 with: 'Mr. Ramsay is at liberty to print the two poems with his Latin verses, but not to substitute a new title for "Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries"'; and on October 5 he writes: 'Certainly I will not have the two books published in one volume; and as this is what the Florence Press asks, the answer is simply no.' And to that decision he remained constant. Thus, as we shall directly see, the very idea that Holt should have published the two books in one volume (which I do not think they did) made him see red. Houston Martin asked him something in this connexion and elicited a very direct answer, dated September 26, 1934: "'A Shropshire Lad" and "New Poems"'² will never be joined together while I am here to prevent it. I think it a silly notion.'

And then on November 3 a letter with an obscure first paragraph and a second which, as I was both Sacheverell Sitwell's admirer and his publisher, did not make me happy, glad though I was to hear that the sherry was a success:

'The misprints are all copied from a publication of the Cambridge University Press.

'Thanks for *The Thirteenth Caesar*, though I am finding it dull. On the other hand I have just tried the first bottle of the Fernando VII sherry from Thame and found it excellent.'

¹ See p. 53.

² *The Yale Review*, Winter, 1937, p. 301. In a letter to the same correspondent three weeks later Housman wrote: 'New Poems was only a slip of my senile pen'; he had of course meant *Last Poems*. The two books were joined together, with the rest of Housman's poems, in 1939. (See p. 278.)

XXIV

1925 and 1926

THE year 1925 begins with trouble. Housman, acting on what I believe to have been a mistaken impression—although it may well have been that Holt had announced such a book—writes on January 4:

‘I am obliged to write to you about the following matter, because I do not know how I stand.

‘I have received a press-cutting from America which says that Henry Holt & Co have published *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems* together in one volume. I have written to ask them if this is true: if it is, I shall take *Last Poems* away from them, supposing that I can. But I find that in my agreement with them there is no clause empowering me to withdraw from them my license to publish, as there is in my agreement with you. Before I go to a solicitor, perhaps you can give me a notion of what my rights are.

‘Thanks for your novel, though neither it nor any of them are as good as *Caviare*.

‘I enclose the *menus régionales* which you wished to have returned, and I do not wonder, as they make one’s mouth water.

‘P.S. Can I make them destroy the combined book?’

The question with regard to Holt required looking into. It turned out to be a false alarm. Holt’s advertisement of the two books in uniform binding and neatly put together in a box—‘boxed’ is the trade term—was very likely the cause of it. But Housman was once at least, after the books had passed from my control, and apart from the Riccardi Press edition, tempted to permit a fine and limited edition of the two books. It was a production of the Alcuin Press. I asked Housman how such a thing could be. He answered that he had been moved by the

fact that F. L. M. Griggs was interested in the issue and that his admiration for Griggs's work was great enough to overcome his previously declared objection to fine editions.¹ In this case the two books were separate but "boxed" together.

His opinion of my new novel, *Every Wife*, I expected, for he had been lukewarm about its predecessors; and the one bright thing was that I had pleased him with the menus which were issued in connexion with the Section Gastronomique Régionaliste of the Paris Salon d'Automne, 1924: they were the *Menus des Journées Régionales*, a series of luncheons and dinners which visitors to the Salon could eat on certain fixed days, drinking with them the wines of the districts chosen. Housman from his various French journeys already knew most of the dishes.

On March 3 Housman gives his opinion of a manuscript translation into French of *A Shropshire Lad*:

'I have not read this through, but I have dipped into it, and it will not do. It is sometimes surprisingly close to the original, but at other times the formal French phrases crop up; and my verse really will not go into French verse. The worst is that he sometimes does not understand the English: for instance in VIII "a love to keep you clean" is translated "amour, qui garde propre ta maison".'

On March 31, having had his attention drawn to some misdeed, he writes: 'If you think you can bully the malefactors into sending 5 guineas each to the Literary Fund, do so by all means.'

On August 7 he corrects a statement about *A Shropshire Lad*:

'It was not "originally published at 5s." but at 2/6; even the second edition, though much inferior, was only 3/6.

'I have just been stopped in the street by an American lady who was yearning for the last work of your Mr. Mais in the

¹ See p. 79 of Percy Withers's *A Buried Life*, 1940.

window of a shop whose door was locked. She seemed to want me to break the glass for her, but I persuaded her that there were other shops in the town [Cambridge].'

One would have thought that the way in which composers and anthologists continued to worry Housman for permission to use his work would have resulted in his fame as a poet penetrating to every corner of these islands, to say nothing of America, and yet I have been astonished, when talking about the writers of verse of this and the last two generations, to find not only occasionally but very often that my hearer would confess to a complete ignorance of either *A Shropshire Lad* or of its successor. Housman's death did much to increase his fame, for apart altogether from the publicity it received as news, it was followed by a spate of critical articles. But even to-day I am frequently surprised by the fact that his very existence and that of his books are unknown in circles where some attention is apparently paid to literature. Men have come to me to publish their verses, and when I have boasted of being Housman's publisher, they have asked me to write down his name and the titles of his books. The truth is that even the sale of hundreds and thousands of copies makes very little effect. 'What *are* Keats?' is as true to-day as it ever was. And yet composers and anthologists never ceased from troubling. Thus, on August 21, 1925, Housman once more lays it down as a rule that 'composers may be allowed to set poems from *Last Poems* as well as from *A Shropshire Lad* without fee; but in both cases it should be stipulated that only entire poems are to be set, with no omissions'.

On October 5, 1925, I offered Housman some classical books from my father's collection. He answers on October 6:

'Thanks for your offer, but I have so little room for the books I already possess that I am very chary of acquiring more; and

your father's studies and mine did not lie much along the same lines; and in view of my age I am rather narrowing my reading than widening it.

'At Pau there is a very good bourgeois restaurant called, I think, *Dupon, successeur Rolland*, in the *place du Casino*, nowhere near the present Casino. *Truite à l'Américaine* (with *écrevisses*) is the best thing I came across.

'Somebody, I hope it was not you, told me that the local dish of Carcassonne was something called *soufassou*, but on the spot they denied all knowledge of it, and wanted to make me eat *cassoulet* instead, which is a plat of Toulouse, hardly deserving its reputation. I twice fed on the *isard*, the chamois of the Pyrenees; not very good.'

I do not think I ever heard of *soufassou* myself. I asked Hilaire Belloc about it. He answered: 'I never heard of it' and continued: 'Cassoulet, like all stews, depends on very long and gradual cooking, therefore it is only good in small places where they take real trouble.'

On November 30 A.E.H. tells me that 'the 5th book of Manilius is not likely to be published before 1929'; on December 3 Mr. W. L. Williams is to be told that he can use 'In the morning' in his *First Steps to Parnassus*; on January 9, 1926, Dr. A. T. P. Williams,¹ the Headmaster of Winchester, asks if he may print number XXXVI from *Last Poems* in 'a small book of poetry for repetition to be privately printed and sold only to members of this school',² and Housman—on January 28—agrees, 'and if he wants a title he can call it "Revolution", which may be of use, as most readers do not seem to see that it is a parable'. On February 3 he tells me again that '*A Shropshire Lad* is still prohibited to

¹ Now Bishop of Durham.

² I have just been looking at the second edition of this book. It has its defects. (1) In the last line but two of the poem there is an error, as is usual in anthologies; (2) there is no index of authors and none of first lines, and (3) the title is not printed on the spine of the book—which leads to its being lost on a bookshelf. Small matters, but a great public school should set ordinary publishers a good example!

anthologists. What you probably have in mind is that the Poet Laureate, having ascertained that I should not prosecute him, put three poems from it into his selection for scholars'.¹ On October 21, 1926, he writes about another musical matter—a request for permission to make a gramophone record: 'Do what you like about the "—— Editions" and When I was one-and-twenty, provided that I am not required to sign an agreement. These musical people are more plague than profit'; and on the same day in a separate letter, writing in the expectation that I was on the verge of new financial difficulties: 'I do not want to take the books away from your firm. The *vis inertiae*, no longer regarded as a true cause in the physical world, governs me all the same.' On November 4: 'Heinemann write to me that they are thinking of taking over your assets and asking particularly for *A Shropshire Lad*. Before I answer them I should like to have anything you may wish to say on the subject.'

The next of his notes, written on a letter dated November 6 from Mr. — of Ashton-under-Lyne, is amusing. Mr. — had applied to me 're printing' the words of Vaughan Williams's Song Cycle, 'On Wenlock Edge', in the programme of a concert at Stockport. Acting under general orders, permission had been refused. '*Is this decision irrevocable?*' Mr. — writes, going behind my back, to Housman; 'I venture to suggest that if the words were printed (at a small charge if necessary) many people reading the poems for the first time would probably want a copy of the complete work.' Housman's comment is: 'Yes, it is. A.E.H. Especially as he says *re* when he means *about*.'

My difficulties increase. On November 14 Housman writes that he supposes he will 'have to close with one of the offers made by publishers' for his books of poetry.

¹ See p. 53.

Things remain in the balance for a few weeks. Then, having been told that certain arrangements have been made for the carrying on of the business, he writes to me on December 17:

‘I suppose the new arrangement is satisfactory to you, and if so I am glad of it; and for my own part it is a relief not to have the bother of making new arrangements. But when the arrangements are complete I am going to exact royalties on *A Shropshire Lad* for the future as well as on the other book.’

XXV

ANTHOLOGISTS, COMPOSERS—AND A PROJECTED JOURNEY

ON January 22, 1927, as I have asked Housman what has happened to his idea of having a car, he answers me:

‘ . . . The purpose for which I chiefly wanted one is now served by the number of motor omnibuses which take one out into the surrounding country and enable one to start walks at a distance, and for some time past I have ceased to think of a car.¹

‘I do not know what the readers of the Literary Supplement will do without your chat. My kind regards to Mrs. Richards.’

The second paragraph is in reference to the fact that my weekly advertisements in *The Times Literary Supplement* that had been running without a break for some ten years were to cease. The Scotch legal gentleman who had become the dictator in my business did not believe in them.

On February 5 I am to tell the Oxford University Press that they may ‘include the Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries in their selection, but not Bredon Hill’; and, having received a photograph of the Shropshire landscape which Edgar Ward had sent to him at my suggestion, he writes on the same day:

‘The photograph, which to my untutored eye is very magnificent, has arrived, and if you see Mr. Ward I hope you will

¹ An aeroplane had, years before, taken the place of a car in his wishes, as he wrote to his sister, Mrs. Symons in 1911. He actually liked travelling by air. When therefore Sir Stephen Gaselee wrote to *The Times* (September 8, 1936) that he had known ‘a Fellow of a Cambridge college, of Oxford origin’ charter an aeroplane in order to reach quickly his Alma Mater I assumed that it was of Housman that he was writing. I was wrong: it was the Rev. F. A. Simpson, the historian of Napoleon III. Mr. Simpson may of course have been emulous of Housman’s fame as an air passenger.

convey my thanks to him. Thanks also for the Burgundy list and map. I still have a fair amount of the pre-war vintages; and I am told that they do not now take proper care about making the wine, the war having greatly increased the demand among lower classes than used to drink it.'

Mr. Ward is dead now, but the curious who may wish to see a Shropshire photograph which won Housman's approval will find it reproduced as frontispiece to S. P. B. Mais's *See England First*.

On February 9:

'I don't allow the wireless people to recite my poems, but as I allow the poems to be sung to music there is no reason why the songs should not be broadcast. I daresay the music is spoilt, but that is the composer's look out; and the words are mostly inaudible.'

On March 1 a postcard:

'I have just seen an edition of *A Shropshire Lad*, 1925, with a disgusting misprint, souls' for soul's, on p. 99: how many more I don't know. I have said again and again that new editions must be sent to me for correction.'

And on March 9 a letter in answer to one in which, since he has said that he will now take a royalty on *A Shropshire Lad*, I have made a suggestion not on my own account but on that of The Richards Press, which is the new name of the business, bestowed on it by the Scotch legal gentleman just now referred to:¹

'... I agree that the edition of *A Shropshire Lad* which is out of print ought to be reprinted, and, not being avaricious, I do not object to the royalty proposed, though I was told the other day by a bookseller that the practice of supplying booksellers

¹ But before this, to quote Housman in a letter to his brother (February 16, 1929), there had been a 'financial expert who reorganized' my business for my creditors. 'He thought he would like to read *A Shropshire Lad*. He did, or as much as he could; then, in his own words, "I put it behind the fire. Filthiest book I ever read..."'

with 13 copies when they only pay for 12 has ceased for about ten years. . . .

'I do not send a formal answer to the formal communication till I hear from you further.'

And thank heaven! when the proofs are submitted to him he says, on March 28, that they 'seem to be all right'.

A Welsh poet, calling himself Cynan, and described as Crown Bard, National Eisteddfod of Wales, writes to ask if he may print in a book of his original poems his translations of 'Reveille', 'Is My Team Ploughing?' and 'Bredon Hill', and on April 5 Housman assents: 'Cynan may be the Welshman whose translations of my poems are said to be superior to the originals, so he had better have what he wants. Of course he must not print the English.'

On April 26 Housman writes:

'I enclose a letter which explains itself. If the facts are as stated, I shall be glad if you will be as disagreeable to Mr. Caldwell as you can. I think he had my permission to print the poems, but not to misprint them.'

This letter has been evoked by one which Mr. Brian Finn, of Clifton, evidently a devout admirer, had written to Housman, drawing his attention to certain rather important misquotations in an anthology, *The Golden Book of Modern English Poetry: 1870-1920*. I tell him that I will write to J. M. Dent & Sons, the publishers of the book, and am then told by Housman, on May 2, 'to put the three grave offences in the forefront of the battle, and use the stops and capital letters only as auxiliaries'.

It proved impossible to make myself as disagreeable as I could to Mr. Caldwell as he had been dead for two years! Naturally Messrs. Dent made the alterations desired. The amount of time I have had to devote to correcting errors in anthologies! And the errors breed other errors. A poem is copied from one anthology to another, and the errors in one

are repeated again and again. Anthologists have seldom a passion for accuracy, or at least a sufficient passion to make them go to original sources in order to ensure it.

On May 7, 1927, Housman writes: 'As to Is my team ploughing Mr. Orr must be warned not to omit part of the poem, as I am told Vaughan Williams did', that very part, I take it, that a London morning paper, back in 1898, had dealt with in so dull a manner. But perhaps after all it may not have been that part, for a friend asked Dr. Vaughan Williams what he thought of this letter and whether he would mind its being printed. His reply was to the point: 'You may print anything you like. If the biographer consents I think I ought to be allowed my say, which is that the composer has a perfect right artistically to set any portion of a poem he chooses provided he does not actually alter the sense: that makers of Anthologies headed by the late Poet Laureate have done the same thing—I also feel that a poet should be grateful to any one who fails to perpetuate such lines as:

The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.'

I don't myself agree with Dr. Vaughan Williams, but they will have it out, no doubt, the poet and the composer, on that Golden Floor to which Housman on another occasion referred.

On May 13, Housman, in answer to my offer of the book, writes: 'I have not got the *Annuaire Gastronomique* you mention, and should be glad to have it. I am thinking of a tour in Burgundy at the end of August.' He then went away for the vacation, or part of it, for he writes on June 22:

'I have been away for three weeks and neglecting my correspondence generally. Thanks for *Auberges et Hostelleries*, and also for the *Dial*, though I did not gather what part of the Paris Letter I was to observe particularly.

Thanks also for apprising me of your business affairs. No publishers have yet come suing to me.

Motoring back from Gloucestershire I lunched at the Spread Eagle at Thame and conversed with the landlord.¹

On August 13 Housman warns me that he will be leaving Cambridge on the 19th for Paris 'where I shall be at the Royal Monceau Hotel, Avenue Hoche, probably till the 26th, after which I shall have no fixed address for a fortnight or more, and letters should be addressed to me here'. And, as it happened, I myself, with my wife and Hélène, my stepdaughter, arrived in Paris during his stay, and when he knew this he wrote me the letter of August 22 which appears in my fifth chapter and which led to my going off with him to Burgundy. Fate was indeed tempering the wind to the shorn lamb.

¹ John Fothergill, in whose *Innkeeper's Diary* (p. 289) is a Housman anecdote: 'One day I asked A. E. Housman how he pronounced *ænothéra*. His reply was, "Evening primrose".' Fothergill thought this 'priggishness in a garden'; on his side, Housman said that the story was an example of Fothergill's power of invention!

XXVI

EATING AND DRINKING OUR WAY TO DIJON—

I DISLIKE the phrase, but it was a great time that we had in that fortnight, although for me it had one defect: when it was half over I suffered from an infernally painful tooth and greatly tried Housman's patience in consequence—although I must say that he showed no annoyance. To begin with he left it to me to decide whether we should take the train to some such place as Sens or Auxerre and then proceed by car, or whether we should have a car from the start. I decided on the latter course, for I did not want to cede a mile of the proffered enjoyment, and I went to an English-American firm, Morgan, Booth and Pott, friends of mine, in the rue Caumartin, for a car, the only drawback from my point of view being that it was to be a closed car, or at least one which could be closed. And so we started out from Paris, on August 26, 1927, in a rather heavy vehicle, under the guidance of a guaranteed chauffeur, one Louis, who was supposed to know everything there was to know about Burgundy and any other district in which we might find ourselves. And indeed he did know a great deal. However, he found it rather difficult to adapt his mental processes to the requirements of his employer, who did, it is true, once he got beyond Auxerre, zigzag about the province in what to Louis must have seemed an extraordinary manner. Our first stop was Sens, where we saw the Cathedral—alas! I have no architectural memory—and lunched at the Écu d'Or. As we were approaching its parent town, we drank Chablis Closerie 1925,¹ which we

¹ 1925 was, I learn, a poor vintage, but probably the Chablis we had was an exception. Generally there are exceptions.

found, or which Housman found, curiously unlike most Chablis he had known, Vouvray-ish rather, slightly effervescent and with a faint flavour of saffron. We followed it with a Volnay 1921. From Sens we went on to Auxerre, where, drawing up at the *Épée*, my host astonished me by ordering two rooms and *two* bathrooms with that note of assurance which suggested that he was certain that such accommodation would be available. Don't you wish you may get it! I said to myself. To my astonishment there *were* two bathrooms, each communicating with its own bedroom; and yet the *Épée* is not a great hotel and Auxerre is not a big town. I dare say I was astonished because I was not used to such travelling *en prince*. It was, however, but a foretaste of the milord manner in which A.E.H. journeyed. He was not at all like Cowper's hero. We had for dinner an excellent Châteauneuf du Pape 1911; and, the rest of the food being unimportant, we found a celery-like dish, *côtes de blettes*,¹ which Housman remembered for years.

I ask myself whether I shall go on with this vinous and gastronomic chronicle. I confess that I kept it rather for Housman's sake than for my own, and as the record, when I sent it to him a month later, gave him pleasure, I think I should proceed. You see, others have written of the churches, the architecture, of these enchanting towns, but no one else has eaten and drunk his way through them with such a companion. To Auxerre we went because of its architecture—its church architecture—and Housman did his best the next morning to show me what I should see and what I should enjoy. And enjoy it I did—but, as I have said, I have no architectural memory. Clambering about the Auxerre streets which descend to the Yonne, we passed a humble wine-shop which advertised Chablis on draught,

¹ See p. 254.

and, for ten minutes, I allowed myself to usurp the role of host and gave Housman, at the cost of two and a half francs, a pint of wine from the wood. It was cool and delicious: I recommend a similar experiment to other travellers in the town. Walter Pater has helped to make famous.

After the morning's exercise we drove to Vézelay, where, at the Hôtel de la Poste et du Lion d'Or, we drank with our lunch a Chablis 1923 which was good and a Beaune *première tête* which was indifferent; and, dining that night at the Hôtel de la Poste at Avallon, we drank a Corton 1915.

The next morning we struck out by car for Chablis, a town with a famous and much abused name. The Étoile at Chablis did something to upset our time schedule. As we came to the centre of the little town the first thing that we noticed was a comely figure in a chef's cap and apron, and we saw with satisfaction that he was at some work at the door of the Hôtel de l'Étoile, the inn we were seeking. He proved to be Monsieur Bergerand, the *patron*, himself. What a man! Housman ordered a meal and wine, and we set out to explore Chablis and to look curiously at its vineyards. I will say no more of these than that they could no more produce all the wine calling itself Chablis which is sold in Paris and in Soho and in New York and everywhere else, than Capri could export all the Capri that is sold to the ignorant of all Italian-wine-drinking nations.¹ We walked here and we walked there in the neighbourhood of Chablis—which is not in the true Burgundy wine country²—and all the time,

¹ 'Chablis is more "imitated" than any other wine.' P. Morton Shand's *A Book of French Wines*, London, 1928.

² Chablis, in England at least, is generally listed as a white Burgundy. French law now forbids this practice in France. As for Capri, Cecil Cheesman tells me that at a recent lecture at Vintners' Hall one learnt that Capri 'is now a generic term for white wines of a certain type and standard grown in the region of Naples'.

having smelt the odours of Monsieur Bergerand's kitchen, we were thinking of luncheon rather than the little *collines* which bore the Chablis vines. However, the dulllest of walks come to an end and we got back to a meal which evidently made on my companion as deep an impression as it did on me. *Écrevisses à la crème* was one dish that stuck in our memory; specially in Housman's. Apparently also a *ballottine de pigeonneau* remained. We drank a Vaudésir 1915 and a Clos des Hospices 1921. And after that we started out in the car to explore the neighbourhood, going indeed quite far afield, till I could no longer find my way about the map that I carried. We saw strange and interesting towns, Tonnerre, Noyers, Nuits-sous-Ravières, but when I could identify them they did not suggest that we were on the road back to Auxerre, to which A.E.H. had said we would return to dine. And then, as the afternoon passed into evening, he turned to me and, without a smile on his face, asked me where I thought we were; and when, after calculation, I showed him, he remarked that perhaps, as we were still far from our hotel at Auxerre, we had better go back to the Étoile at Chablis and see whether their dinner was as good as their *déjeuner*. Then he smiled! He had had it in his mind since we had finished our coffee. And the dinner was just as good, if not better. Monsieur Bergerand showed himself flattered by our return. What he gave us to eat I noted: *potage santé*, *soles au beurre d'écrevisses*, *andouillette du pays grillée*, and *fondue de poulet à la crème* to which, in our special honour, truffles had been added. It was not a cheap, and it was not a dear, dinner. We drank Chablis Grenouilles 1921 and Nuits Vieilles Vignes 1919—and an exceptional Marc.

And while I am about it I had better put down here that Housman's habit then was to order for *déjeuner* every day a bottle of red and a bottle of white wine, but that at dinner

he generally deemed one bottle of red wine sufficient—as indeed it was. We did drink brandies of one sort and another after dinner, but never in excess; and never, never, except on that one occasion at Auxerre, the fault then being mine (if fault it was!), and, in pursuit of knowledge, at Arbois, did we drink between meals. And never a cocktail!

On the following day, August 27, intending to go as quickly as convenient to Dijon, we stopped at Semur and drank a white Pommard Aligoté 1921 and a Chapitre de Beaune; and, arriving betimes at Dijon, we dined at the Cloche and drank a Romanée of 1904, the oldest wine we encountered in the fortnight. No doubt we could have found 1904 and 1906 elsewhere but they did not appear on the wine-lists of the hotels and restaurants we entered and would have been obtainable only at the price of discussion with the various *patrons*, a thing from which Housman was averse. The next day we went over to Beaune and, dismissing Louis, the chauffeur, in the centre of the town, devoted ourselves to the sights. Our arrival at the Hôtel de la Poste for *déjeuner* was not without humour. We were both of us dressed without care, and Housman, in a dark suit and the old-fashioned small cloth cricket-cap that he used generally to wear on such touring occasions, looked just a little, may I say? like a very uninstructed, incurious and accidental traveller. Moreover, we had arrived on foot. The Poste, I take it, did not generally get much in the way of money or of true appreciation out of guests so little smart. Anyhow, we entered the dining-room unwelcomed and took our seats. We were early guests. A tired waitress brought us a menu. It offered food by no means worthy of the occasion, the lunch of the day. However, there it was, to eat or to reject. We ordered; and we were asked whether we would drink red wine or white. Housman naturally wanted the list. It was brought, and as was his habit, in

the absence of some quickening of memory, he ordered two wines which, if not the most expensive, were toward the foot of the list—a Meursault Perrières and a Montrachet, both 1919. Now, as I remember it, the dining-room at Beaune is a chamber many-sided and with many doors, and, no sooner had the girl disappeared through one with her notes of what was wanted and had given time for them to be read, than through yet another there entered almost at a run but with considerable circumstance, a veritable *maître d'hôtel* and an impressive *sommelier*. The demand for rarer, more expensive, wines had set the machine going. After all, these *moches* travellers must be worth attention! Would the gentlemen please pardon the girl's mistake? The menu she had shown us was not what we should have seen. It was a great error. One much more imposing was placed immediately in Housman's hands. Please would he order from that, but before he could do so, arrived the proprietor or the proprietor's son, anxious to see if he could be of service, and anxious too to compliment Monsieur on his choice of wine. 'Ah, Monsieur, I see well that you know your wines . . .', and before the luncheon was over the *patron* had shown Housman other typewritten lists and had tried hard to sell him dozens of this Burgundy and that. He did not succeed, but he did succeed in providing us with better dishes than we had anticipated from the list first shown. We ate that dish, *écrevisses à la crème*, which is so good but which occurs to no one in England (although there must be plenty of crayfish about, since, even to-day, at the foot of the garden of the house in which I write, they are to be found), a *pâté de foie gras maison*, and then *truffes-en-serviette*. And, after a perambulation that extended as far as Autun and Sombernon, we returned to Dijon and dined *chez* Racouchot (*Les Trois Faisans*¹) on caviare with

¹ Let me rescue here a passage in praise of *Les Trois Faisans*, although

chopped shalot, a *consommé de volaille* and a *coq au Chambertin*, with which we drank a Chablis 1919 calling itself *Suprême* and, as it was a special occasion, a Corton Clos du Roi 1915.

The next day, August 31, we went to Gray and Langres, where at the Europe we had a lunch of which I did not find it necessary to write down any particulars save that we drank Pouilly-Fuissé 1921 and an undated Meursault, returning to Dijon to dine in the Avenue Maréchal Foch at the Châteaubriant, which had been recommended to me by Hilaire Belloc. Its *patron's* name is Bony, and Housman admonished me, if I ever wrote of the place, not to forget the excellence of the *escargots*,¹ which had been sought for, a little before their proper season, specially for us; the onion soup—especially the onion soup—and a fish stew, *pauchouse*, into which as many ingredients entered as into *bouillabaisse*, carp, eel, tench, and pike being among them. Monsieur Bony, in spite of the fact that he had worked in New York, was a *traiteur* with a conscience and we had put him on his mettle by giving him a day's notice of our visit. And the wine was good, a *Clos Vougeot* 1915. Housman felt—and I agreed with him—that *chez Racouchot* and *chez Bony* we had touched the high-water mark of Burgundian cookery, but we both of us lamented that we had not time to try one more restaurant, that at the railway station.² We did have a talk with its proprietor, who was specially anxious to be it is J. B. Morton's passage from the Beachcomber column in the *Daily Express* and not Housman's: 'One of the great glories of this earth, and, in the old time, when I could eat a fowl at a mouthful and fight two men while doing it, I often came to The Three Pheasants and brawled there until it was time to brawl somewhere else.'

¹ We must have impressed Monsieur Bony, for, to my surprise, a few years later he sent me, at the beginning of the season, by post, a quantity of *escargots*, and very excellent they were. To Housman the gift should have gone, but I had once or twice visited the Châteaubriant in the meantime.

² I have done so since, and it is very good indeed.

allowed to show us his version of *coq-au-vin*. But we had to move on. It was at Dijon, by the way, that Housman after dinner made a remark to me which may shed some light on the Ventimiglia story. Fixing me with his eye, after some conversation I had indulged in with Monsieur Bony or another, he said: 'Why do you tell these bloody lies to these unsuspecting French people?', a remark which he supplemented one night, again after dinner, a few days later, at Lyons: 'Your talent for conversation, on which I have already remarked, is always making me drink more than I ought.' These two notes represent my sole Boswellian endeavours on that journey!

XXVII

— AND FROM DIJON BACK TO PARIS

WITH our departure from Dijon I felt, inaccurately, that we were finished with the true Burgundian part of our holiday. Now, on September 1, we were off to the Jura, where I was anxious to visit Arbois—and Housman was too, for we had both drunk Arbois in Paris and had enjoyed that *pelure d'oignon* wine, which a king of France had so greatly appreciated. We had been told that it was a wine good enough in Paris but excellent in its own country—for it did not travel well. Also that, within reason, the older it was the better it became. We did not find it so. In fact, drinking with all care and piety during the morning at Arbois a really old Arbois at a high price, A.E.H. thought it no better than that he had had in Paris for eight francs. However, before we left the district we were to have considerable further experience of Arbois and other *Jurassien* wines.

The Paris Anglo-American firm of tourist agents who provided the car which had brought us into the middle of France, had as their manager a Monsieur Buffa, a brilliant and knowledgeable Frenchman, who, attracted by Housman, had put himself out to be useful to us on this journey and, knowing our interest in wine, had made me promise that if we went near Dôle I would call on a Monsieur Alfred Perrier, a friend of his, a small watchmaker and jeweller. Reaching Dôle before lunch, I insisted on taking my rather reluctant companion forthwith to Monsieur's shop. A smiling, comely Madame was at the counter. Monsieur was on the premises but at work. He should be fetched. Yes, they had expected us. Their good friend, Monsieur Buffa, had warned them. And then Monsieur himself arrived, small

and quick, alert, friendly, so pleasantly friendly. Yes, we might go back to our hotel, the Genève, to lunch, and, while that happened, Monsieur would finish his work and would get out the little car and he would take us to see the neighbourhood. We were interested in wine, *hein?* Yes, he had heard that. We must be taken to Arbois. Arbois—ah, the wine of Arbois was good! We had been there that morning and had tried it? And we hadn't cared for it? *Quel dommage!* Well, he would show us. It was worth two bottles, the wine of Arbois. No distance away. We should spend the afternoon pleasantly and by the time we were back Madame would have made her dispositions and we should have dinner with them. . . . He had an old bottle or two. 'Ah, Alfred—he loves his wine!' Madame added.

I looked at Housman. He was not a man whom you could carry off to the house of a stranger at a moment's notice. Visibly, he was pleased at the invitation. He did not wait for me to speak but accepted for us both. These, he afterwards told me, were people very much after his own heart: it would be a new experience for the two of us. He not only smiled his assent but he made it clear that the whole programme gave him pleasure.

Housman, the shy, the reserved Housman!

Well, we made our way back to Arbois and there, introduced to owners of vineyards and *restaurateurs* and wine-merchants, we did more than justice to the wine of the neighbourhood. But for some reason or other we did not appreciate it as highly as we were expected to do. I noted an Arbois *jaune* which was good. . . . Perhaps wine without food in that late summer afternoon was not a very natural drink. We weren't ready for it, had not the appetite. Besides, to tell the truth, the kind Monsieur Perrier had too high an opinion of our capacity. That second visit was not a great success, but the fault was not in our host but in us.

Ah, but the evening made up for it. As far as our suitcases would allow we had dressed for the occasion, and, arriving at the appointed hour, we found Madame and her husband in the little living-room behind the shop, so happy-seeming and welcoming that we knew at once that we were in for just such a night as we had hoped for. Madame did everything. Ladled out the soup, which she had made with her own hands, and cleared away, and gave us dishes, also her own work, which were so admirable and so clean-tasting that we almost forgot all the other food we had eaten on our journey. And Monsieur attended to the bottles. It looked when we arrived as if there was a little forest of them. And they were rare, of rare vintages and of rare quality. . . . We laughed and we talked and we ate and we drank, and Alfred Perrier told us of his business and of his youth and teased his wife; and she told us how to her husband his cellar was more than a child; and I who have little French with which to talk sat silent and listened to my now interested and quite voluble friend. We did not stop very late in that little back room, but that was not because we had eaten and drunk too much. We had eaten and drunk enough! And then we walked back to our hotel in the light of a crescent moon, jolly and a little unsteady. We were neither of us any the worse for it in the morning. Thereafter we talked much of the Perriers, Monsieur and Madame, and thought that one day we would visit them again. I still hope to do so. Monsieur Perrier promised to visit Cambridge and London and to call on both of us. . . .

The next day, September 2, we drove to Quingey and fed at the *Truite de la Loue*, drinking a Pouilly Fuissé 1921 and an undated Montrachet. We did better at Besançon with a Hermitage Rochefine 1920 at the Hôtel des Bains, and a Chambertin 1915, next night *chez* Gavillon in the rue des Granges. I think we came to the conclusion that

Besançon was hardly worth two nights; but that, perhaps, was owing to the rain. Nor was our excursion from Besançon interesting, although we visited Pontarlier, St. Point, Malbuisson, where we drank a Meursault 1921 and a Chablis 1906, and Syan. On September 4, leaving Besançon we went to Poligny, and to Baume-les-Messieurs, where we drank Château-Châlon 1915, having failed to find it, or indeed any wine or any food, in the near-by declining hill-town which gives the wine its name. Magnificent yellow wine it was, a little reminiscent of imperial Tokay. We were told that the lords of Château-Châlon were in the old days on friendly and visiting terms with the lords who ruled in the Hungarian wine-lands, that gifts of vines had come from Tokay to the Jura and that, on instruction, they were treated exactly as they had been in the country whence they came. Hence the reminiscent flavour of Tokay this *vin de garde* carries. Thereafter Housman instructed Louis to drive us by the pass of La Faucille into Switzerland, but Louis proved strangely reluctant to take this as a definite order, and it was not until we got up to the frontier—where it was very cold and very, very foggy—that he turned in his seat and confessed that he had entirely forgotten before leaving Paris to get his passport *visé* for Switzerland. There was then nothing for it but to retrace our steps, go down again into the valley and make our way to St. Claude, where at the Hôtel de France I at least felt that we were turning our faces homeward and that the best of our holiday was over, in spite of the good humour induced by an undated Chambolle-Musigny. Besides, I had developed my toothache! Buying at some small town a lotion to reduce the pain, I was forced to have the car stopped every hour or so while I anointed the offending tooth. Housman's patience under this series of trials was indeed to his credit. I could not myself have been so patient.

We woke on September 7 to find clear, sunny weather again, and went on to Bourg, where we lunched on the famous Bresse chicken and drank a Chablis and a Meursault Goutte d'Or, both 1919. After lunch to Pérouges, whose antiquity I assured Housman he must not miss but which did not come up to our hopes. And then to Lyons, to the Hôtel Carlton, dining *chez* La Mère Fillioux and having *her* chicken, *la Volaille Truffée Demi-Deuil* (perhaps in half-mourning because the *patronne*, the famed Madame Fillioux, had recently died) and a Châteauneuf-du-Pape 1911, and walking after dinner to the very extremity of the point at which the Rhône and the Saône join. It was worth while, that walk. By the way, I have wondered how it was that, although I made the suggestion more than once when we were not far from Belley, I failed to get Housman to go to the birth-place of Brillat-Savarin. Perhaps he had looked it up in the *Guide Michelin* and had seen that apparently no attempt had been made to carry on its gastronomic fame and that it had no compelling architectural attraction. Still, it would have been a pious deviation. . . .

In the morning, having slept ill owing to the roaring traffic of the centre of the city and having been woken again and again, as it seemed, by the collisions of motor-cars under our windows, we went by way of Feurs to Clermont-Ferrand. At Feurs we lunched in an inn which I hope profoundly I may be able, when on a pious reconstruction and repetition of this fortnight, to find again, for Madame, who had no other visitors, fed us excellently and provided in particular a really remarkable *terraine de foie truffée*. I think the inn must have been the Parc et Provence. Its cellar provided us with a Pouilly-Fuissé 1921, a Meursault and a Moulin-à-Vent 1919. An unusually generous allowance.

At Clermont-Ferrand, which we found unsympathetic, we stopped at the Grand Hôtel in the Place Jaude. The rooms

were good, but on the second night we decided that we would try our dinner luck elsewhere, in spite of a Hermitage 1916. In the meantime, in the morning we drove as far as the bottom of the Puy du Dôme and climbed on foot to the very top, and, for our pains, got wet through as we did our best to find a more direct way down through the undergrowth. We lunched at the Café de Paris, finding its food better than that of the hotel, and drinking a Meursault 1920 and a Richaumont 1921. We dined at the Gastronom, to which someone had recommended us. It was difficult to find and on that day not worth finding. However, we were given *perdreau rôti bred seauce (sic!)*, and, as Morton Shand had not at that time told me about the local Covent white or *rosé*, or the red Chanturgue, we drank Hospices de Beaune 1906. Housman, I believe, made the acquaintance of these local wines on a later occasion, and he certainly returned to the Gastronom—perhaps for the ‘bred seauce’ for he always teased me about my dislike of that English accessory. He liked it.

After Clermont-Ferrand we really did turn toward Paris. It seemed to me that some magic had gone out of our journey. We were on the way north, and to me the north means usually grey skies and the pavements of London and work. I had had ten days without any work at all! And with only a kindly philosopher to order my goings out and comings in. Montluçon, an untidy place without any character that we could see, gave us a poor lunch on September 8, 1927: we made up for it by drinking a Pouilly-Fuissé 1923 and a Montrachet 1915, and went on to Bourges, which Housman knew well. There we stopped at the Angleterre, and dined at the Escargot without delight, drinking a Sancerre Clos Fricambault 1921. But I, at least, did not notice much what I ate, for on our arrival the cathedral had enchanted me. We saw it with a moon almost full, and

I, for the first time on that journey, got up early and went betimes to see its beauty in the early morning sun. That day we had to be back in Paris: Housman had an engagement for dinner, and I had to catch the 5.5 p.m. train at the Gare de Lyon. It was our last day. Depression ruled over my side of the car, and I entered the Savoy at Fontainebleau, a *grand luxe* hotel so very different from those hotels we had been in, almost with distaste. However, even a cosmopolitan *déjeuner* and deep gloom could be washed away with the aid of a Meursault Goutte d'or 1919 and a Château La-Tour-Blanche 1921.

And that was the last meal we took and the last bottle of wine we drank on that fifteen-day journey. In the following month I wrote down for Housman's delectation some notes of that fortnight. He acknowledged them from Cambridge on October 17, 1927:

'Many thanks for your list of our wines in Burgundy, and also for the reminiscences appended. Your memory is better than mine in most respects; but I think that at Feurs what we had was two bottles of white wine (the first probably *Pouilly-Fuissé*) and then half a bottle of *Moulin-à-vent*. The Ballottine de pigeonneau at Chablis, as I remember it, was slices of cold pâté. Do not forget the onion-cheese soup at the Châteaubriant.

'Montrachet Aîné cannot owe its origin to Saintsbury, for I find it in a much older book by Vizetelly.

'Aequam memento rebus in arduis

Servare mentem (Horace Odes II, 3 1-2)

means "be sure to preserve a tranquil mind amidst difficulties".

'I have read and noted what you say about starting business again, and the proposals as regards my poems seem to be satisfactory; only I should object to the two books being issued in the same form at the same price, as the one is less than two-thirds of the other in length.¹

'I had not heard that Manilius I was out of print, but I expect it is true; and the Juvenal must be very nearly so.'

¹ That surely could not have been the only reason. See p. 212.

I should add, while I am about it, that the 'starting business again' came to nothing—then at least.

And now I suppose I should prepare myself for criticism of this chapter and the one that precedes it. Is one shocked that A.E.H. should have used the epithet 'bloody'? It came out just as I have written it down. If you call it cursing, then I must tell you that Housman swore very little, very little indeed. I cannot remember any other 'swear-word' passing his lips, although that is perhaps a lapse of my memory. In his mouth the word 'bloody' assumed rather a genial quality. Anyhow I swear that my Boswellian notes were correct, and I should confess that my sole reason for writing them down was that they carried a certain compliment to me. Is one shocked that I have so frankly shown A.E.H. taking pleasure in, and spending much time on, what he ate and drank? Well, he did so. His passion in life was, I should say, accuracy in Latin and in Greek, and he had also pleasure in architecture, but he liked his meals. Do not mistake me. He did not eat a great deal. When at table he was of the Edwardian school rather than that of Victoria or the Georges. Nor did he, save on the rarest occasions, drink too much. *He enjoyed.* That is the truth: he enjoyed, appreciated, was happy with good food and with fine wine. Perhaps a further truth is that, having, as Mrs. Symons his sister, has said,¹ gone far to suppress other senses, he did strongly retain pleasure in his senses of taste and smell. Whatever else he denied himself, he saw no reason to deny the pleasure of eating and drinking. His spare, wiry frame was good evidence that he did not indulge to excess.

¹ See p. 145.

XXVIII

CORVO, ST. GERMAIN, AND T. S. ELIOT

HOUSMAN had shown some liking for the work of Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo), and, having in my hands for a little while in the autumn of 1927 a novel of his in typescript—a novel which at the time seemed to have little chance of publication for the excellent reason that it was full of potential libels—I offered to lend it to him. (It has since been published: *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*.) He writes on December 13:

‘Miss Hemmerde has sent me Corvo’s book, which I have read and will shortly return. When he depicts Italians or describes Venice it is delightful; the talk about himself I skip; the quarrels with other people show them in a better light than him. I am obliged to Mr. A. J. A. Symons for presenting me with his biography.¹ I don’t know whether the *Dialogus* also sent is a present from him or from you or whether I should return it. It is in decent Latin, and the matter is mildly interesting, though it leaves me calm. I don’t know if it is Corvo’s: my passions would probably be more inflamed by his letters, which are what I thought you were going to send me.

‘I am thinking that it is time for a cheaper edition of *Last Poems*. I have not said so to the publishers yet.’

The book by A. J. A. Symons, the learned secretary of the First Edition Club and of the Wine and Food Society, was one of Ye Sette of Odd Volumes, *Frederick Baron Corvo*, and the ‘letters’ are a whole collection of letters in Corvo’s handwriting, sent from Venice to a friend in England, fantastic, extraordinary, letters. How, later, they could have been allowed to go floating about in the autograph market passes comprehension. They were Corvo with

¹ Not to be confused with a later, fuller, book, *The Quest for Corvo*, by the same author (London, 1934).

the *t*'s crossed and the *i*'s dotted, Corvo offering the more than doubtful 'delights' of Venice to a friend in England. But to readers who had liked *Stories Toto Told Me* or *Hadrian VII* they were characteristic and of some literary and psychological interest.

No letter then till after the turn of the year. On January 17, 1928, he writes, from Cambridge:

'I hope I have not kept you waiting for the return of the proofs now enclosed, but in these last few days I have been rather occupied.

'I shall be very glad to be one of the dedicatees. But it was not only the fresh trout but the fresh truffles of the Gorges du Loup¹ which dwell in my memory.

'I am not sure that I have seen any of the books about wine that you mention. The menu of Sorret² is very appetising.

'*"Hans Tiransil"* may be a Dane in America who wrote to me about translating *Last Poems* and produced some versions which Gosse said were good.

'Kind regards to Mrs. Richards (also Hélène), and thanks for her New Year letter.'

Housman's willingness to be a dedicatee refers to my book, *The Coast of Pleasure*, which he allowed me to dedicate to him with my other 'playmates' on the Riviera: my wife, Edward Clodd, Frederic Jessel, Theodore Dreiser, E. S. P. Haynes and Philip Sainsbury and to the memory of Belfort Bax and Sir Hugh Lane.

And on January 19, 1928:

'You did enclose two notes from Symons, which I have not kept, though the handwriting was very magnificent.

'You may cite me as a witness to the onion-cheese soup.³

'... If I were a capitalist I should ... engage you as a courier, salary unlimited. ...'

¹ See p. 132.

² A Lyons restaurant on the Quai de Retz.

³ Eaten at the Châteaubriant at Dijon.

This is followed on January 23 by a postcard to correct something in the proofs of *The Coast of Pleasure*: 'The fresh truffles at the Gorges du Loup were not eaten alone; they were made into an omelette.'

Then on January 30:

'2000 copies of the 3/6 edition of *A Shropshire Lad* were prepared for the public on June 15 of last year, and 5000 of the small edition some time later, as the stock was running low. I have written to the Richards Press asking about the stock of *Last Poems*, as that is a subject about which I am curious myself. . . .

'Last year we reformed the College kitchen and engaged a new chef, who was at one time employed at the Café Royal. He is an improvement on the old one, who had grown up from scullery-boy under this venerable roof; but his variety and inventiveness are ahead of his execution.'

On March 29, 1928, I sent him the promised typescript of the Corvo letters.¹

By April 24, 1928, I had also lent Housman Maurice Des Ombiaux's *Le Vin* in the series 'L'Homme à la Page'.

'I return with thanks M. Des Ombiaux' book, which is readable enough, but, like so many books on wine, too literary and not scientific enough.

'I will also send back Corvo's letters in a day or two. That sort of thing is not really improved by literary elegances, and I have been more amused with things written in urinals.'

On May 14, 1928, he writes to thank me for my 'brisk and instructive' book *The Coast of Pleasure*; adding, 'I expect to be in Paris, or perhaps at St Germain, for the fortnight June 5-19. Any chance of seeing you there?'

In this week I sent him a copy of Anita Loos's *But Gentle-*

¹ I had written: 'I suppose I ought not to post it to you, but if by some mischance I am prosecuted, I shall maintain that its literary interest to citizens connected with literature places me in a privileged position.'

men *Marry Brunettes* at the request of the American publisher — 'but it ought to have arrived in this country before the English edition came out. Carelessness in the American office, I imagine. Perhaps though the statement in the *Evening Standard* that you were responsible for the introduction into England of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is not true. I forgot to ask you.' To that inquiry he made no reply, but he seems to have confessed something of the sort to Cyril Clemens.¹ And I also told him that there was a chance of my being in Paris, but that I should not be stopping at St. Germain, where he had chosen one of the most expensive hotels in France. He then writes on June 4:

'If it were convenient to you to stay at St Germain as my guest I should be delighted; and Louis should be able to take you in and out of Paris, unless your business interviews there were too numerous or inconveniently fixed.

'I see you are crossing on Friday: is it still only two nights you mean to stay?

'I would send the car to meet you at the rue Caumartin on your arrival, as you and Louis might easily miss one another at the Gare du Nord.

'I am leaving Cambridge to-day, though I do not cross till to-morrow.'

Well, I went to St. Germain on June 8 and stopped not two nights but four. Small wonder! It was on the evening of my arrival that, dining at the Pavillon Henri IV, which, by the way, was an old haunt of Housman's, and finding that we were to drink red Burgundy with a lobster dish, I asked him if he paid no attention at all to the convention which I thought forbade, in almost all circumstances, the drinking of red wine with fish. 'That doesn't, as far as I am concerned, apply to Burgundy', he answered; 'Burgundy is strong enough to stand up to anything.'

¹ See *An Evening with A. E. Housman*. By Cyril Clemens. Missouri: International Mark Twain Society. 1937. Cf. p. 178 of this book.

The next morning we drove to Chartres and lunched uninterestingly in some small eating-house under the shadow of the Cathedral. Housman knew well both Chartres and its cathedral, but he seemed disappointed with this visit to an eating-house where heretofore they had managed to please him. We returned to Paris to dine in the Avenue Trudaine in Montmartre, choosing Le Clou rather than either of its neighbours. The error was not mine. A don at Cambridge had recommended the place. Housman after dinner went off to keep some engagement and I returned to St. Germain. On the following morning we walked in the forest and, driving to Maisons-Laffitte, lunched there and went on to a more distant forest. In such ways my host knew not fatigue; each day had to be full. We dined at our hotel. And on the next, my last, day we drove, the choice being left to me, to Vernon and on to Les Andelys where, because of the excellence of its *pâté*, we lunched at the Chaîne d'Or. But alas! as it was a Monday there had not been time to replace the *pâtés* that the week-end visitors had finished off, and we did not do so very well. Then, looking first for Crawford Flitch, who wrote *Mediterranean Moods* and *A Little Journey in Spain*, at La Disme, close to Claude Monet's home at Giverny, we went on to Paris and dined at the Hôtel Royal Monceau.

During all the four days Louis and the car were at my disposal. Housman was always that kind of host.

He himself was soon back in Cambridge. He writes on June 22:

'... At the present moment a cheaper edition of *Last Poems* is preparing for the autumn as I thought it high time: 5000 copies, as it is said that no lower number would be remunerative. ...

'I enclose *Irish Wine*.¹ Many thanks for the map of the

¹ By Maurice Healy, K.C.: one of *Ye Sette of Odd Volumes*. Mr. Healy has, since written *Stay me with Flagons* (London 1940).

French provinces, which arrived soon after you left. You will be amused to hear that the careful Louis knocked down a small girl.

'I forget the exact circumstances under which I have just received, at your request, a signed and numbered copy of Shane Leslie's poems, though I remember you saying something about them. Am I to keep it? and should I acknowledge it to anyone else?'

'The Shane Leslie poems went to you', I replied, 'because apparently you had interest in him; but it was not, you said, a sufficient interest to make you want the book at St. Germain. There is nobody to acknowledge it to.'

On June 25 he asks me to lunch with him at Trinity on the 29th, and adds:

'At the present moment my feelings towards you are much embittered by the discovery that your last small edition of *A Shropshire Lad* contains 15 errors, some of them filthy.'

At this lunch he told me, according to a note I made that evening, that Charles Whibley had told him that it *was* John Morley who had refused *A Shropshire Lad* for Macmillan. He also told me that Clarence Darrow, the U.S.A. lawyer, insisted on coming to Cambridge to him as he had got off so many possible murderers by quoting poems out of *A Shropshire Lad* in support of his arguments: he showed Housman reports which bore this out. In particular 'The Culprit' (which, incidentally, is in *Last Poems*) had been useful. The poem reads:

'But fetch the county kerchief;
And noose me in the knot,
And I will rot.'

But the 'county kerchief' in Mr. Darrow's¹ mouth had

¹ Apart from my newspaper knowledge of Mr. Darrow, I have an interest in him on account of his introduction to the very rare Ransom pamphlet, *John Reed under the Kremlin*, by Lincoln Steffens (1922). It shows the trend of Mr. Darrow's sympathies.

become the 'County Sheriff'—'Fetch the County Sheriff, &c.'! My note further adds that Housman's 'rage at the small 1926 edition of *A Shropshire Lad* was great'. Misprints!

Apparently Housman did not care for Shane Leslie as a poet (later he was to read *The Oppidan*) and I, disappointed when he told me so, sent him Ernest Bramah's *Kai Lung Unrolls his Mat* to take its place. He replied on July 4, 1928:

'Thanks for Bramah's book, which I am reading after dinner with amusement. I would send Shane Leslie back to you if you thought you could find a more appreciative recipient.' The book did come back to me. In fact, his memory had played him false: he had handed it to me himself. I have it still.

In October A. J. A. Symons asked me to intercede for him with Housman that he might have permission to use a poem, or poems, from *A Shropshire Lad* in an anthology. I said that I would do what I could but that I was quite sure I should have no success. Nor did I. Housman writes on October 9, 1928:

'If Mr. Symons will consider, he will see that to do as he wishes would be a shabby act towards the generations of anthologists whom I have repelled by saying that I have an invariable rule. He may be consoled, and also amused, if you tell him that to include me in an anthology of the Nineties¹ would be just as technically correct, and just as essentially inappropriate, as to include Lot in a book on Sodomites . . .

'Thanks for the handbook on hanging² . . .

There is a postscript to this letter of October 9: 'If Mr.

¹ John Lane, says Mr. J. Lewis May in *John Lane and the Nineties*, 'was at the centre of the constellation of the Nineties. . . . The Bodley Head was the chief home of the new movement'. No book by A. E. Housman issued from The Bodley Head.

² *A Handbook on Hanging*. By Charles Duff. London, 1928. 'I do not send it you because of your known predilection for the subject', I said in my note. Unlike the rest of the world who had read it, A.E.H. did not like it, it seemed. I think he was wrong.

Symons ever feels sad, he ought to be able to cheer himself up by contemplating his handwriting.'

On October 6 I sent Housman an inscription from a renaissance fountain at Colmar, which much amused him :

'En buvant de l'eau à table tu refroidis ton estomac, bois plutôt modérément un vieux vin subtil, je te le conseille, et laisse-moi en repos.'

My final Housman exhibit for this year is a letter to *The Times Literary Supplement* of December 20,¹ in which he deals with T. S. Eliot's request, in *For Lancelot Andrewes*, for an explanation of the stanza in Shelley's 'To a Skylark':

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

Here is the explanation of a poet one of whose interests was astronomy, as witness his *Manilius*:

'Although this ode is not one of Shelley's best poems and enjoys more fame than it deserves, it is good enough to be worth interpreting. Quintilian says that you will never understand the poets unless you learn astronomy; and as this subject is not now much studied in girls' schools it was only to be expected that Mr. Moore's "Egeria" should darken with misinformation the ignorance of Mr. Eliot. In the stanza . . . the silver sphere is the Morning Star, the planet Venus; and Shelley is giving a true description of her disappearance and using an apt comparison. The moon, when her intense lamp narrows in the white dawn clear, is not a sphere but a sickle: when she is a sphere at sunrise she is near the western horizon, visible in broad daylight and disappearing only when she sets; so that nothing could be less like the vanishing of the skylark. A.E.H.'

It was in January 1928 that Housman was one of the pallbearers at the Westminster Abbey funeral of Thomas

¹ See also T. Sturge Moore's *Armour for Aphrodite*, pp. 180 and 206 (London, 1929).

Hardy, the others being Stanley Baldwin, Ramsay MacDonald (who were the leaders), J. M. Barrie, John Galsworthy,¹ Edmund Gosse, Rudyard Kipling, A. B. Ramsay, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, Bernard Shaw, and the Rev. E. M. Walker, Pro-Provost of Queen's College, Oxford.² Ten years later I seized the opportunity of asking Bernard Shaw what impression Housman had made on him on this, the only, occasion on which they had met. Shaw's memories were vague, for just as he was about to engage Housman in conversation, Gosse, faithful to his habit, pulled them apart that he might introduce Kipling to Shaw. And Kipling, I may add, when introduced, fled like an outraged rabbit.

¹ Dr. Percy Withers in *A Buried Life* (p. 100) refers in this connexion to Housman's 'violent personal antipathy' to Galsworthy: He 'told me how proudly he had accepted the office of pall-bearer. . . . The following day he saw in the press that Galsworthy was to be one of the number, wrote immediately to decline the office, and only capitulated as a consequence of Barrie's entreaties.'

² 'In stillness the clergy and the mourners took their places. One saw splendid copes of purple, cloth of gold and crimson flowing up into the sanctuary. Then the coffin was laid on the bier, and one saw the ten famous pallbearers holding the fringes of the pall.' (From the *Manchester Guardian's* account.)

XXIX

BOULESTIN, WHITE HAUT BRION, AND THE O.M.

EARLY in January, 1929, I had written on behalf of a friend, Albert Buhrer, who was proposing to make some investigations at Lake Nemi, to ask Housman if he knew anything about the Nemi stories, and one or two other questions. He replied on January 15:

'The poem on R.L.S. appeared at his death in the *Academy* in 1894. I know nothing of the reprint.¹

'I have a second cousin whose name is Arthur, but I do not know that he is also W.; and he is a clergyman, I think in Sussex.²

'In the 17th century one of the Colonna family, hearing that there were sunken ships in the lake of Nemi, did some dredging and brought up a pipe or something inscribed with the name of Tiberius—though one account does not go quite so far as that. There is not a word about them in Suetonius, nor so far as I know in any classic, and it was not likely that there would be. There is a treatise by one V. Malfatti, *Le navi romane nel lago di Nemi*, 1905, which Mr. Buhrer probably knows.

'Thanks for his book; but I would rather you did not send me books out of mere bounty, because I have hardly anywhere to put them.'

Correspondence apparently languished until May 22, when he wrote briefly: 'I return the very appetising menu. Two years ago I lunched very well in the Place St Michel at what may have been the same establishment, though I don't think it was then régionale.' He was right: the menu

¹ This is in reference to a privately printed issue of the poem on Stevenson which A. J. A. Symons told me he had recently seen—one of an edition of a hundred and fifty copies. But he could not show it to me as he had given it away. It was no doubt an unauthorized issue.

² I had asked him if a North Country Housman, who wrote verse, was a relation of his.

was that of the Rôtisserie Périgourdine. On June 1 I wrote to him on the same kind of subject:

'You will remember your wish to find in Burgundy a Montrachet Aîné, and Morton Shand's pontifical statement that "there is no Montrachet-Aîné¹—that was a slip of old Professor Saintsbury". You, however, would not agree that the source of your belief was anything of Saintsbury's.

'I have just had submitted to me by a French publisher a book entitled *Le Tour de France Gastronomique*, by Edouard Dulac, in which, giving a list of the White Burgundies and their classification, he says: "Vins blancs — hors ligne: Montrachet aîné, à Puligny".'

To which he replied on June 5:

'I should like to get hold of Dulac's *Tour de France Gastronomique*, but there is no reason why I should deprive you of your copy.

'It is strange that when we were in the Côte d'Or people there denied the existence of Montrachet Aîné.'

On August 9 I send him Neville Cardus's *The Summer Game*, 'since I am told that its best things are about Shaftesbury'.

On August 16 a postcard: 'My intention is to leave here on Thursday, sleep at the Buckingham Palace Hotel, and cross on Friday. I shall stay at the Continental. Do not send me a wall-map of Paris, however lovely, for I have no wall to put it on.' And indeed so full were his rooms and so taken up were the walls with windows, bookcases, an occasional picture and a sideboard, that he wrote no more than the truth. But he made a mistake in the name of his London hotel. He corrects it on August 19:

'I ought to have said Grosvenor Hotel, Buckingham Palace Road. I don't expect to be there till about half past six.

'I am deserting the air on this occasion because my life, until my Manilius is quite finished, is too precious to be exposed to

¹ I omitted some words from Morton Shand's opinion: 'the most senior and finest of the three growths is known simply as *Le Montrachet*.'

risk of destruction; even though they have already killed their proper quota for this year.¹

'I am thinking of Poitiers, Angoulême, Périgueux, Cahors, Gorges du Tarn, Le Puy, and perhaps round through Burgundy again.'

In a later letter Housman asked me to accompany him on part of this new journey. He writes on a postcard from Cahors on August 31: 'I expect to reach Autun, Hôtel St. Louis et de la Poste, before night on Sept. 4. I suppose you can hardly be there by that time, but I hope I shall find a letter saying that you will arrive on the next day, or else appointing a rendezvous [so spelt]. I have to be in Paris on the 8th.'

But it was not to be. Lumbago prevented my going. He writes on September 14:

'Your lumbago caused me much selfish annoyance, and I hope (altruistically) that you are now rid of it. Morgan and Pope have Frank Harris's book² for you. They provided me with a car less liable to sudden illness than the one we had two years ago, and a chauffeur whose strong point, like Louis', was smiling, not finding his way nor knowing north from south. Much fine scenery after Périgueux, and a fine cathedral at Rodez. Food not varied or inventive, especially soup: I do not mind Santé twice in 10 days, but Parmentier I do. I was however agreeably surprised by a Palestine soup which had not the faintest trace of artichoke. The best meal was at the Gastronomes at Clermont-Ferrand.³ In Paris I was not best pleased with the Belle Aurore, where they made me ill, perhaps with the very poor caviar: when I ordered fraises des bois, of which they had run short, they offered me a mixture of raspberries with what they had left, thinking apparently that I should not know the difference. But the place is thoroughly and pleasantly French, and the hors d'œuvres look as if one could lunch entirely on them. The Grand Veneur is good though its plats régionaux

¹ Cf. A. E. Housman. By A. S. F. Gow. Cambridge, 1936, p. 56.

² The second volume of Frank Harris's *My Life and Loves*. I had borrowed it for him and he had left it for me with Morgan and Pope.

³ See p. 236. This restaurant is not mentioned in the 1938 *Guide Michelin*.

are not an exciting selection. At the place in the Place St Michel I was disgusted with a pretended Sole Normande smothered in *mushrooms*, of all things in the world, and tasting exactly like the usual sole de la maison of a Parisian restaurant. The best cooking that I found was at the Escargot. Avoid Clos de Vougeot 1915: for some reason it has turned out badly, as did Lafite 1900.

'My kind regards to Mrs. Richards.'

Unimportant notes until the end of the year: 'A happy New Year, and thanks for the instructive volume¹ returned herewith. Hélène, you probably know, looked in last term with her husband and a brother-in-law² who writes poetry. The happy New Year is for Mrs. Richards too.'

On January 30, 1930:

'Thanks for your enclosures, but I have enough liqueur brandy for my needs for some years. Yes, I should like to see D. H. Lawrence's book,³ and I am grateful to you for the trouble you take to keep me supplied with improving literature.

'My kind regards to Mrs. Richards and Hélène. I have got something like lumbago myself.'

Having digested the D. H. Lawrence, he writes on February 5:

'I return D. H. Lawrence, with thanks for your perilous enterprise on my behalf. It did not inflame my passions to any great extent, but it is much more wholesome than Frank Harris or James Joyce.

'I hope you and yours are well. I have not seen any news of Hélène.'

Then two letters, of March 29 and April 9, about Willy, Colette's collaborator.⁴

In April I dined *chez* Boulestin, and I must have talked to that nimble writer and decorator turned master-restaurateur

¹ *Rhenish*. By Henry E. Vaux Huggett. One of Ye Sette of Odd Volumes.

² Charles Taylor, now M.P. for the Eastbourne Division of Sussex.

³ *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Paris).

⁴ See p. 338.

about Housman and his taste for food and wine, for, admiring Housman's work, he asked me to extend to the poet an invitation to lunch or dine with him *chez* Boulestin in Southampton Street. I did so, and Housman replied on April 16:

'Boulestin's noble invitation is just the thing to draw me to London, which the Italian pictures did not. Of course lunch would suit me better than dinner, and I suppose you too; and no Wednesday nor Friday would be possible. I did not know of the white Haut Brion, and I see from Cassagnac's book that it is a recent invention.'

I had forgotten that I had mentioned incidentally to Housman that Boulestin had in his cellars some of that very, very rare, almost legendary, white Haut Brion, of which so few bottles leave the Château that each is numbered just as if it were a copy of a special large-paper edition of a book by Oscar Wilde, or some other poet of the 'nineties, a wine not mentioned in H. Warner Allen's *The Wines of France* but which is dealt with at some length in P. Morton Shand's *A Book of French Wines*. Morton Shand claims to have penetrated the closely guarded secret of the Château. The Cassagnac whom Housman mentions is Monsieur Paul de Cassagnac.

At that memorable dinner—after all it was dinner that was chosen—we drank a bottle of that Haut Brion. There were four of us: Housman, our host, A. H. Adair and myself. Its date was May 7. 'Please make B. understand that I appreciate his amiable invitation very much', Housman had written to me beforehand.

It was while we were walking to that Boulestin dinner that I saw Housman really angry. He had called for me at Garland's Hotel at 7.55, and as we passed eastward along the Strand I bethought me how, months or possibly years before, he had told me that he had spent an hour or two of that day writing a suitable refusal of the Order of Merit.

'Why, has it been offered you?' I asked, delighted that for once in a way honours were being reasonably bestowed.

'No, but it is to be offered me when a vacancy occurs. I know that', he answered; and we passed from the subject.

Now, not long before the day of the Boulestin dinner, a vacancy had occurred and, quite naturally as I thought, I turned to him and asked whether he had been right and whether he had yet declined the honour. In view of our previous conversation there was nothing extraordinary in my question, but Housman, forgetting, thought otherwise. He paused, looking at me with a face of rage. 'What the hell has that got to do with you?' he ejaculated, and then, in a second, resumed his progress. I was thunderstruck, not knowing what to answer. But I had to say something:

'Nothing, of course. But as you told me about it yourself and told me that you would refuse it when offered, I don't see that my half-question was out of the way.'

It was a sudden anger, gone almost as soon as it came. I never referred to it and such a thing never happened again. And as for the offer of the O.M., the circumstances are set forth in frank detail in the 'Honours Declined' section of Laurence Housman's *A.E.H.* Therein John Galsworthy is mentioned. As we know, for some reason of which he never spoke to me, Housman could not 'abide' Galsworthy, or, perhaps I should say, could not abide his work. Housman, of course, would have been more than 'a worthy holder of that great and coveted distinction', as *The Times* said of it in writing of Jellicoe.

On May 17 arrives from Cambridge a postcard: 'Have Morgan and Pott (if that is their present style) a branch in London which practises as a travel agency, and if so at what address?' His purpose in asking this question was soon apparent, for he went to Paris, where, as I have shown, he

made the acquaintance of Mrs. (Edith) Wharton. He writes from Cambridge on June 29, after his return:

'H. V. Carrington himself had sent me his list of Moselles, mentioning your name; but I have recently bought rather a lot of quite nice Moselle for ordinary drinking, and my cellar is full.

'*Blette*, the vegetable we ate at Auxerre, I have now seen at a greengrocer's. It is something between a Cos lettuce and a cabbage: the edible part is the stem near the root.

'I had splendid weather in Paris, and motored out to a good many places I did not see two years ago. There is a nice little restaurant (very crowded on Sundays) called the *Vanne Rouge*, at Montigny-sur-Loing, south of Fontainebleau, right on the brink of the stream.

'I expect to stay here now into August. Hélène and her husband were here in my absence.'

On August 6 he writes to say that he will be 'going away for three weeks on Saturday and shall spend most of my time in Worcestershire'. That letter also asks 'What in the world should you be buying letters of mine for?' I had seen that a letter of his was coming up for sale at Sotheby's and had given a modest commission for its purchase. The letter was of no importance, contained forty-three words, and it cost me a guinea!

On October 6, 1930, Mr. Charles W. L. Orr has a request to make: that he should be allowed to have prepared a good German translation of certain poems from *A Shropshire Lad*, musical settings of which he had been given permission to publish, in order that he might be enabled to arrange for publication by a German or Austrian firm, since 'at the moment there is such a slump in the English music-publishing business'. Housman writes across the corner of Mr. Orr's letter a curt 'Refuse. A.E.H.', but he meant nothing by the curtness. It was to save trouble. After all, I knew what his response would be.

XXX

PARTLY GASTRONOMIC

ONCE more the subject of the unusual vegetable that we had eaten at Auxerre in 1927 interests Housman—after nearly four years. He sends me a postcard about it on January 12, 1931:

'*Blette* (that is how to spell it) is also called *Poirée*, and in English is *Leaf-beet*, *Sea-kale-beet*, *Swiss-chard-beet*, in botany *Beta Cicla*. It belongs to the genus *Chenopodium* or *Goose-foot*, as your newspaper said. The leaves can be cooked like spinach.'

On February 19, 1931, having received from me a new book of poems of which I myself thought very well, *Middle Earth*, by Gamel Woolsey,¹ a young American woman who had been introduced to me by Llewelyn Powys, Housman writes laconically: 'There is some good in it.' Later he gave me back the book and I saw with interest with what care he had read it, care that I found later he gave to almost any book that came his way which had any claim on his interest. Thus on page 15 he has pointed by a note in the margin to the rhyming of 'dawn' and 'horn'; he has also drawn attention to the line 'You'd feed me brown bread, chicken white', to the fact that 'peacocks with a thousand eyes' was sheer Christina Rossetti, that 'under bare apple boughs' was Swinburne, to the use of 'will' instead of 'shall', and so on.

On February 20, 1931, he writes to thank me for some wine I had sent him through an undergraduate, Pat Lawrence of Corpus: 'Your young man brought the Château Grillet safe. Thanks for it: it is a wine I like, and

¹ The American edition, arranged by me, was done by Simon and Schuster. Miss Woolsey's next book, *Death's Other Kingdom* (Longmans)—in 1939—was prose and about the Spanish war.

I suppose that 1915 was good on the Rhône as well as in Burgundy'; and on April 15:

'I was interested in your account of the Rothenstein dinner. Mackail, of whom you speak so disparagingly,¹ is a remarkably handsome man.

'I have just come back from nearly a month in the South of France, Pyrenees and Bordeaux; at which last place I ate for the first time in my life garlic soup, called *tourin blanchie* or *tourin Bordelaise*: very good, though it contained an egg, which I thought irrelevant. Never go to Narbonne: I don't add Quillan, because no one would think of going there, unless mad like me.'

The Rothenstein dinner was a congratulatory one given to Sir William Rothenstein at the time of his receiving his knighthood.

On May 4, 1931:

'Many thanks for the *Carte Gastronomique*, which is a great possession. I don't however trust it implicitly. In 1919 I stayed a fortnight at Brive, and pâté de foie gras was unprocurable. Also it gives no idea of the wine district round Chablis.

'I have copied out the poem. What I told you probably was that I no longer copy out poems for admiring strangers, as I once or twice did long ago.'

And on June 24, 1931:

'I shall be passing the night of July 10 (Friday) in London. You were kind enough to say that you had a bed in your bijou residence, and if it is empty and you are there I should much like to occupy it. I should also like to take you and Mrs. Richards to dine with me somewhere; and if you will come I should be obliged if you would select the restaurant and order the dinner, for which I give you *carte blanche*. I shall not have evening dress with me.'

With some trepidation I did order the dinner—at what

¹ 'Disparagingly' is not the just word for what I had written. I wrote that Mackail had a fine head, reminiscent of Housman's own, but not so forceful. 'Disparagingly' was Housman's joke.

was then Sovrani's Malmaison in Stratton Street—and here it is: *Caviar, Quiche Lorraine, Tortue Claire, Truite Saumonée Chambord, Suprême de Volaille Maréchale, Petits Pois Frais, Pommes Nouvelles Rissolées, Fraises au Kirsch*. With this we drank an Oppenheimer Goldberg 1921, passing to some red wine which I have forgotten. Anyone is at liberty to tell me that this was a heavy, ill-balanced meal. I do not set up to understand the ordering of a fine meal. I can only make a shot at it. This time I was nervous.

The 'bijou residence' was 24 Stanford Road, Kensington.

On July 19, 1931: 'Thanks for Pinchbeck Lyre, which I return. It seems to have more spite than wit.'

On September 11, 1931, he writes to thank me for a book:

'I suppose nothing will cure me of procrastination. I bought *What to eat and drink in France* a week or two ago, and was meaning to tell you about it: and now comes your gift. If there is anyone else you would like to have it, I will forward it; or I will return it to you. I do not believe all I read in it: for instance the list on p. 254 of the best claret years since 1918 causes me some surprise.'

On November 6, 1931, Heinemann writes to me that they have arranged to take over from Tauchnitz the *Anthology of Modern English Poetry* made by L. L. Schücking, and asks if Housman will 'extend to us permission to include... "Be still, my Soul, be still" and "Reveille"', and I ask Housman. He replies on November 13:

'I have no recollection whatever of having given my consent to Tauchnitz; but when the Richards Press took them to task they said that they had a letter from me giving consent, and they gave its date; and I suppose they would not be brazen enough to tell an utter lie.

'But I did not give them consent to omit a comma, nor to alter the English word *Reveille* into *Réveille*, which is not even French. Moreover it is a wretched selection containing, for instance, six pieces of Sassoon's; and I will not give my consent to Heinemann.'

On December 14, 1931, he writes:

'I once met Ford Madox Hueffer, as he then was, at Rothenstein's, but I am sure I neither did nor said anything which would take even one page to tell. I hear that I appear also (as doubtless you do) in the reminiscences of Fothergill of Thame; and I am invited to buy the "Private Papers of a bankrupt bookseller" because on p. 216 there is something about *A Shropshire Lad*.

'I have bought for use "The Hungry Traveller in France" by Norman Davey (Jonathan Cape).'

An English publisher in Paris—Jack Kahane of the Obelisk Press, the author of several amusing novels and, later, of *The Memoirs of a Booklegger*—asks me in January 1932 if I can help him to get permission to print 'an edition—edition *de grand luxe*—' of *A Shropshire Lad*. Housman deals with the matter on January 16, 1932:

'You correctly suppose that I will have no more editions *de luxe*. Talking of pornography, you have been remiss about promising me a sight of Frank Harris's last two volumes, for I understand there are four in all, and I have only seen two.'

Child Education asks permission on January 29, 1932, to use 'the first verse of . . . "The Cherry Tree"' in their Spring Extra Number. Housman answers: 'There is no harm in this, if they think they can print the verse correctly.' And then some Indians ask for permission to reprint something from *Last Poems*. 'No,' Housman replies on February 23; 'the Hindoos should behave better.' On February 25, saying that he has had two tickets sent him for the dinner of the Girdlers' Company on March 17, he asks if I would 'care to use one of them'. I would. On February 28 he writes:

'Good. I enclose your ticket. I have accepted in your name as well as my own. We shall be placed side by side, and there is no reason why we should meet beforehand, but I am intending to stay as usual at the Great Eastern hotel in Liverpool

Street, which is convenient for getting back to Cambridge next morning. I shall not wear a white waistcoat, partly because I have not got one, partly because I am told on high authority that, though now so common, it is incorrect unless dancing is to follow. The invitation is from the Master of the Company, who sent the second ticket because he will not be able to pay attention to a private guest.’

About this time Percy H. Muir, of the firm of Elkin Mathews Ltd., that right bibliographer, asks me for information about an error in certain copies of the first edition of *Last Poems*, an error that makes those copies specially valuable to bibliophiles—‘an idiotic class’, Housman called them—and he sends me his firm’s catalogue with this entry:

1200 HOUSMAN (A. E.). *Last Poems*. Grant Richards. 1922.
First Edition, original cloth, with dust-wrapper, cr. 8vo.

£1/10/-

Like most copies of the First Edition, this has faulty punctuation on p. 52 which is said to denote the first issue. It probably does nothing of the kind.

I sent the catalogue page to Housman who returned it with the word ‘most’ underlined and, as a gloss, a simple ‘no’; he does the same thing to the words ‘the first issue’ adding ‘the first 4000 I think’; and on March 8 he sends a postcard: ‘You were wrong, and presumably I was right, about the fault on p. 52 of *Last Poems*, for I have just seen a copy (1922) in which it is not present.’ But these mysteries are beyond me and I must leave it to bibliophiles to work out the exact bearing that these facts have on the question at issue. All I do know with any certainty is that the first printing of the book (in October) was four thousand copies; the second, in the same month, two thousand; the third, in November, six thousand; the fourth and fifth, also in November, five thousand; and the sixth, again in November, four thousand.

On March 24, 1932, I must have been asking Housman,

for a friend, about Bordeaux, its churches and its restaurants, for he writes on that day:

'The restaurant with which I was best pleased at Bordeaux is one whose name I forget,¹ but it can be found by means of the enclosed plan. It has the same name as a newspaper whose office is next door.

'The Chapeau Rouge keeps its reputation, though I did not think it so good as formerly. The — — is losing its custom. The Basque restaurant Etche Ona is only middling.

'The cathedral is a good one of the second order; but the two most interesting churches are romanesque of the 12th century, St Seurin and Sainte-Croix. The ruin of a Roman amphitheatre called the Palais Gallien is worth seeing.'

In May my *Memories of a Misspent Youth* is coming out and I have sent Housman a copy of the introduction which 'Max' has written for it. He tells me on May 18:

'Certainly Beerbohm has given you a very nice puff, and I hope it will work.

'I am very sorry to hear about [the death of] Mrs. Grant Allen, who always struck me as most interesting and clever.

'I shall be in Paris at the Continental from May 29 to June 14. I cannot offer you anything of an invitation, for I shall have a friend with me who would not mix with you nor you with him; but if by chance you should be there I hope you would come to dine or lunch with me one day. I have several menus of restaurants which you have sent me from time to time, and I should be grateful for any up-to-date information.

'If the two last volumes of Frank Harris can be sent to me, as you suggested, I shall be grateful to your friend for taking the trouble; but my wish to read them is not at all intense, and I hope he will not in any way put himself out.

'My kind regards to Mrs. Richards.'

In this month we asked Housman again to come to London—we were then at 4 Cranley Place—for a night in order to meet Walter Sickert at dinner. Sickert and he had

¹ He means the Restaurant La Presse at 6 rue de la Porte Dijeaux. The *Guide Michelin* gives it only one star.

both said to me that they would like to meet. Housman writes on May 24 from Cambridge:

'I should have liked very much to see Sickert (no longer Walter) again and to sample your new house, but unfortunately I have on Friday evening a very sacred and long-standing engagement.

'You told me once that you had heard of a restaurant embedded in the country not far from Paris, like the Moulin de Bicherel but better. Can you remember about it?'

And again on May 26:

'I have no firm belief in the existence of your Crouy-sur-Coing,¹ and the Guide Michelin holds out little hope of Crouy-sur-Ourcq. But I recommend to you the Vanne Rouge at Montigny-sur-Loing, a few miles beyond Fontainebleau: only avoid Sunday.'²

On May 31 he is at the Continental:

'I have been to the Écu de France, which is good and evidently very successful, rather uncomfortably crowded after 8. I ate the two things given most prominence in the menu and praised by the patron or chef-d'hôtel or whoever he was: they were regional, which meant Norman. One was a sole with mushrooms, certainly very good, though it is not a mixture I approve of;³ the other was deadly dull, boiled or stewed fowl with mushrooms again, though not the same sort, and the hard uncatable parts of artichoke leaves. The patron stands over the waiters while they serve one, in a menacing manner, so that it is clear their heads will be cut off if they fall short in anything. When I started to order Burgundy the Sommelier insisted on Chambolle-Musigny 1921, which was most excellent. Though bouillabaisse was not on the menu, the restaurant was faintly pervaded by that agreeable smell or something very like it.'

¹ This may have been a misspelling by me of Croix-Saint-Ouen.

² Cp. p. 254. I wanted no introduction to the Vanne Rouge. In the company of a famous Manchester bookseller I had, one *Pentecôte* thirty years or more ago, lunched there excellently well on eels and other things, and had finished the afternoon, sleeping and supine, upon the raft on which the lunch was laid. I had recommended the place to A.E.H.

³ Cp. p. 251.

It was George Slocombe who told me to send Housman to the Écu de France. This was before that house had its counterpart in London.

On June 3 he is moved to send me a postcard from Paris about a restaurant he has discovered: '—, Bougival. Situation perfectly beautiful, wine quite good, cuisine mediocre, service atrocious. Benedictine poured out in bucketfuls does not atone for badness and coldness of coffee'; and, a week later, on June 10, he sends me a report on five restaurants. Of these the first no longer exists—more's the pity for it was old and had traditions! The last used to be in the rue de Duras. The *pelure d'oignon* is the Arbois wine of which we had drunk so often in the Jura. I had neither seen Housman eat nor heard him praise frogs before:

'*Bœuf à la Mode*. The poulet à la ficelle was cooked in my sight before an electric grate. Neither vine branches nor anything else was kindled underneath it. It was quite good, but not better than French chicken often is. The grenouilles à la Provençale were excellent. The soup was not hot.

'*Marins*. Nothing out of the way.

'*Mon Pays*. Ditto. (Avenue de Châtillon).

'*Korniloff*, rue d'Armaille, I am told by those who live in the quarter, was once good but is no longer so.

'*Gaschy* (if that is the name) I visited and liked the vin pelure d'oignon.'

And another similar postcard, still from the Hôtel Continental, on June 12, 1932:

'*Le Progrès*, 195 Avenue de Neuilly, is a problem. Right at the end, close to the bridge over the Seine, horribly noisy with trams and other traffic, it is about the most expensive restaurant I ever was in. It has a special wine-list of grands crus, running into three figures; and if there is a fool on earth who wants to pay 65 francs for a glass of Chartreuse, he can do it here. Cuisine good; service hardly sufficient

and not in the least soigné. I cannot imagine how it subsists.

'*L'homme* at Chartres has lost its renown, and one is told to lunch at

'*La Providence* in Jouy, a few miles this side of Chartres. I found it good in a simple way. But I cannot stomach "haricots verts" even when fresh.'

Then he returns to Cambridge, whence arrives another gastronomic postcard, dated June 16:

'The chief discovery I made in Paris was a new Béarnais or Bordelais restaurant, Albert Galen, 36 Boulevard Henri IV: very good and plentiful; and everything which should be hot is piping hot.

A tiny, crowded, rather plebeian restaurant, called "Nine" after its proprietress, 34 rue Victor Massé, is Marseillais, and has the best bouillabaisse I have ever eaten outside Marseilles.'

He had been, for him, quite a long time in Paris.

XXXI

MONSIEUR POLLET AND HIS
QUESTIONNAIRE

WHILE Housman had been in France, Mr. C. W. Orr, the composer,¹ who had set to music many of the *Shropshire Lad* poems, had written to me:

'I am writing to ask if you can explain the variant readings in two copies of *A Shropshire Lad* which are in my possession. Neither edition is an early one; the first being a small pocket edition of 1918 and the second dated 1923. In the 1918 edition the third verse of poem LII runs as follows:

He hears: *long since forgotten*

In fields where I was known, etc.

In the 1923 edition it is as follows:

He hears: *no more remembered*

In fields where I was known, etc.

I have italicised the variant reading. There is no mention of the 1923 edition being more than a reprint, and I should be interested to know whether the 1918 version is Mr. Housman's original version and when this other was substituted. As I have never examined a first edition of the poems I do not know how many alterations were subsequently made by the author. I should be very grateful if you could give me any information on the subject.'

I sent this letter to Housman. He replied on July 6, 1932:

'I gave directions that in the edition of *A Shropshire Lad* which appeared simultaneously or nearly so with *Last Poems* there should be two alterations made in the text. These directions you disregarded, so the changes had to wait for the next edition, which may have been the 1923 copy in Mr. C. W. Orr's possession.'

That is true: Housman did give such directions—to me

¹ See p. 254.

verbally. The note I then made exists; it evidently reached my manager—but it was, without reason and by some mischance, not acted upon. The second alteration to which Housman refers was not noticed by Mr. Orr. It was the substitution, in the poem 'The winds out of the west land blow',¹ of 'loose' for 'thick' in the second line of the third verse. The same memorandum has a note to the effect that 'Author prefers linen buckram cover'—that was for *Last Poems*; and another: 'The Author wants to send out about 50 copies to his friends and wants us to send 'em out—with a pleasant slip: "With the Author's compliments" early on the day before publication'; and yet another which shows that he had asked me to send him 'Sacheverell Sitwell's book'—*The 101 Harlequins*, presumably.

During the following months, a day or two at a time, I carried out a plan that I had for some time cherished—a plan to which Housman had cheerfully assented—for, to tell the truth, these modern books of his were in horrid disorder and all over the place. It was the arranging of his miscellaneous modern library. To this work his next letter to me, of September 16, refers:

'If you could come and stay a night or two to carry out your benevolent labour, this next week would be the best to choose, as the college is still quite empty, and I could easily find you a room to take the place of the guest-rooms, both of which are permanently occupied. But the week-end would be impossible because of the Annual Gathering on the 26th: on the other hand Oct. 1 would be all right.'

On November 9 he writes to my wife that he will come to lunch; and thereafter, on one of my frequent visits to Cambridge, I became concerned about his health and, consequently, about the Spartan nature of his immediate surroundings. His bedroom was narrow and austere in the

¹ xxxviii.

extreme; there can have been no undergraduate in college who did not have at least as great a degree of comfort. It was dark and cold, or it gave that impression, and I could not help contrasting it with the degree of comfort to which he was inuring himself on his visits to France. Returning to London, I summoned up courage to write and remonstrate with him, scolding him about this thing and that and making suggestions. He replied at once, on January 29, 1933:

'I am touched by your concern for my health and disapproval of my habits, but your picture is darker than the truth. The fire does not usually go out, nor is the bed to which I retire a cold one, as I keep my bedroom so warm with a gas fire that I do not even need to use my hot-water bottle.'

To that reply I could only answer 'I am relieved!'; but I had no reason to believe that I had succeeded in modifying any of his habits—and indeed, from the very nature of things, some of them could not have been modified. The colleges at Oxford and Cambridge were not built with any approximation to modern ideas of comfort and sanitation. 'The shallow sponge bath of his boyhood remained his preference through life', Mrs. Symons wrote in the Bromsgrovian *Alfred Edward Housman*, and so it may have been, but he had no choice in his Cambridge rooms in Whewell's Court (staircase K, up two flights of stairs). And on one occasion, contemplating moving into more commodious and comfortable rooms in another part of the college, he told me that if he did actually move he would do these new rooms up and would call me in to advise on the installation of a really swagger bathroom! The idea came to nothing, for the rooms did not after all fall vacant. When he did move it was during his last illness to Staircase B on the ground floor of Old Court, where of course he had no stairs to climb.

In this same letter—January 30, 1933—in which I pro-

fess relief which I was far from feeling, I go on to write of Maurice Pollet, the young Frenchman who, more than any one else, succeeded in overcoming Housman's reticence about himself and about *A Shropshire Lad*:

'My young Frenchman, Maurice Pollet, to whom I had said that you might consider some very simple questionnaire, has come in to-day bringing (a) a note to you, to which I have delicately led him to expect no specific answer from you—that is to say, I have not encouraged him to expect too much; and (b) a questionnaire, very alarming in its length and in its gimlet qualities. Here they are.

'I can smoothe the matter out even if you make no reply to him at all. If you do make any kind of reply, I suggest that you should make it through me. I can give him any kind of message. I can, if it is desired, choke him off.

'The young man tells me he is something of a Latin and a Greek scholar.'

I had already spoken to Housman about this Maurice Pollet, who, by the way, was not, as Laurence Housman says in *A.E.H.* (p. 20), 'a French translator of some of his poems', but an admirer and a student. Housman, rather to my gratification and certainly to my surprise, had not told me to choke him off, but, encouraged perhaps by the fact that I knew my place far too well to press the matter, had sent by me the message to which I refer.

Here is the gimlet questionnaire:

I

Please, Biographical particulars

1. In which place were you born?
2. In which place, or places, did you spend your childhood before going to Bromsgrove school?
3. Does your liking for Astronomy date as far back as the Shropshire summer nights of your youth?
4. Were you brought up in any religion?
5. Did you feel early the 'craving for knowledge'?

6. Was your education at Bromsgrove school scientific as well as classical?
7. Did you, at that time, write poetry?
8. Were those years you spent in Oxford decisive for your opinions—say, about life or man's destiny—as such years at a University sometimes are for students?
9. Did you make very wide personal studies when you were employed at H.M. Patent Office?
10. Did your life at University College differ much from what it is now at Cambridge?
11. Did you, more or less regularly, always go back to Shropshire?

II

1. Did you meet with any difficulties in having your *Shropshire Lad* published the first time?
2. People have been puzzled by the title 'A Shropshire Lad'. Can you possibly tell me in what proportion the Shropshire Lad is the same as the reader of the Greek Anthology?
3. Though the poems have been grouped according to a certain principle of unity, rather than one of chronology, may I however rely on their general order to infer from it some sort of evolution which I seem to discern in certain themes?
4. To wit: the theme of Soldiers and War; from 'Leave your home behind, lad . . .' to 'Oh stay at home, my lad, and plough' [in *Last Poems*] with the intermediate poem, 'The Day of Battle'?¹
5. Are not the Great War, and perhaps the antinomy between Friendship and Heroism, causes, among others, of such a change?
6. In the same way, am I too systematic when I deem the poem 'Be still, my soul, be still . . .' to have been written in a moment which immediately followed a particularly sharp crisis of pessimism, and the very next poem 'Think no more, lad . . .' already a natural reaction against too much sorrow, as if sorrow itself begot its own antidote out of its very violence?

¹ LVI in *A Shropshire Lad*.

7. Granted the fact that, in your own words (I apologise for quoting you) 'the light shed on the origin and destiny of man by the pursuit of truth in some directions is not altogether a cheerful light...' are there not, besides, very precise occasional causes to that deep crisis which I suppose to have taken place at a certain time?
8. Have you ever disclosed the names of some of those friends of yours who are made the subject of some of your poems; and if not, do you think that you would, as it were, give them away, in handing their names to the public?
9. You may well understand that, besides these questions, I would very much like to know your own opinion about many people, ancients or moderns, among whom I would bring to the fore: The Stoics, the Epicureans; — Villon, Pascal, Verlaine; — Leopardi; Calderon; — Ed. Fitzgerald; — the German philosophers of the last century: Kant, Schopenhauer, Hartmann; — Th. Hardy; — and many others.

London. 30/1/1933

Maurice Pollet.

No reply from Housman until February 5, 1933. He accompanies it with a laconic note to me: 'I thought that for the sake of posterity I might as well answer some of the young man's Questions.'

And here in full is the reply to Monsieur Pollet. It, too, is dated February 5:

'Dear Monsieur Pollet,

'As some of the questions which you ask in your flattering curiosity may be asked by future generations, and as many of them can only be answered by me, I make this reply.

'I was born in Worcestershire, not Shropshire, where I have never spent much time. My father's family was Lancashire and my mother's Cornish.¹ I had a sentimental feeling for Shropshire because its hills were our western horizon. I know Ludlow and Wenlock, but my topographical details—Hughley², Abdon under Clee—are sometimes quite wrong. Remember that Tyrtæus was not a Spartan.

¹ See p. 271.

² See p. 82.

'I took interest in astronomy almost as early as I can remember; the cause, I think, was a little book we had in the house.

'I was brought up in the Church of England and in the High Church party, which is much the best religion I have ever come across. But Lemprière's Classical Dictionary, which fell into my hands when I was eight, attached my affections to paganism. I became a deist at 13 and an atheist at 21.

'I never had any scientific education.

'I wrote verse at eight or earlier, but very little until I was 35.

'Oxford had not much effect on me, except that I there met my greatest friend.¹

'While I was at the Patent Office I read a great deal of Greek and Latin at the British Museum of an evening.

'While at University College, which is not residential, I lived alone in lodgings in the environs of London. *A Shropshire Lad* was written at Byron Cottage, 17 North Road, Highgate, where I lived from 1886 to 1905.

'*A Shropshire Lad* was offered to Macmillan, and declined by them on the advice, I have been told, of John Morley, who was their reader. Then a friend introduced me to Kegan Paul; but the book was published at my own expense.

'The *Shropshire Lad* is an imaginary figure, with something of my temper and view of life. Very little in the book is biographical.

'“Reader of the Greek Anthology” is not a good name for me. Of course I have read it, or as much of it as is worth reading, but with no special heed; and my favourite Greek poet is Aeschylus. No doubt I have unconsciously been influenced by the Greeks and Latins, but I was surprised when critics spoke of my poetry as “classical”. Its chief sources of which I am conscious are Shakespeare's songs, the Scottish border ballads, and Heine.

'“Oh stay at home” was written years before the Great War, and expresses no change of opinion, only a different mood. The Great War cannot have made much change in the opinions of any man of imagination.

'I have never had any such thing as a “crisis of pessimism”.²

¹ M. J. Jackson. See p. 304.

² In a longish letter to Houston Martin (dated March 22, 1936, a few weeks before Housman's death, and printed in the *Yale Review*, Winter,

In the first place, I am not a pessimist but a peyorist (as George Eliot said she was not an optimist but a meliorist); and that is owing to my observation of the world, not to personal circumstances. Secondly, I did not begin to write poetry in earnest until the really emotional part of my life was over; and my poetry, so far as I could make out, sprang chiefly from physical conditions, such as a relaxed sore throat during my most prolific period, the first five months of 1895.

'I respect the Epicureans more than the Stoics, but I am myself a Cyrenaic. Pascal and Leopardi I have studied with great admiration; Villon and Verlaine very little, Calderon and German philosophers not at all. For Hardy I felt affection, and high admiration for some of his novels and a few of his poems.

'I am yours very truly

'A. E. HOUSMAN.'

There is one point in that reply that should be dealt with here: 'My father's family was Lancashire and my mother's Cornish.' Was that word 'Cornish' a slip of the pen? How could it be? Laurence Housman, on the page of *A.E.H.* to which I have already referred, says: 'For this statement, as regards his mother, no justification can be found'; and when, in October, 1936, in connexion with a memorial broadcast of Alfred Housman's poems, currency was given to the mistake, for it was a mistake, although at that time the Pollet document had been seen by hardly any one, Mrs. Symons, his younger sister, wrote to the *Sunday Times* of November 1, 1936:

'... Will you help me to correct a considerable error that occurred in the otherwise admirable memorial broadcast of my brother's poems?

'Poems distinctly belonging to the impersonal Shropshire group, and referring to the frightful tragedy of Uricon, were fantastically connected with an imaginary clash of strains in the author's own blood—Saxon and Celt. It was stated that

1937) Housman describes himself: 'In philosophy I am a Cyrenaic or egoistic hedonist, and regard the pleasure of the moment as the only possible motive of action. As for pessimism, I think it almost as silly as optimism....'

his father was Lancastrian and his mother Cornish; but as to his father, the claim was far-fetched; as to his mother, absolutely incorrect.

'The main stem of the Housman family was seated at Lancaster for some generations before county inter-migration became easy; and A.E.H.'s great-grandfather, the Rev. Robert Housman, was pure Lancastrian. His wife, however, came from the Midlands and their son, our grandfather, the Rev. Thomas Housman, married a wife born in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, of Midland parents on both sides. Our father was born in the Midlands with an attenuated strain of Lancastrian in him; and A.E.H. was born in Bromsgrove with little but Midland blood in him on his father's side.

'Our mother, I am certain, possessed no Cornish ancestry at all. Her father, John Williams, D.D., was pure East Devon on both sides. I have his pedigree going back for generations, one stem in it being the Drakes of Devon. Her mother's ancestry I have not traced back far, but they belonged to an old family of Cotswold cloth manufacturers—not at all likely to have a Cornish strain in them. . . .'

It is also worth noting that when Housman spent a week with me in Cornwall (in 1916) he made no reference to any share that Cornwall might have in his ancestry.

I should add that Maurice Pollet did not then, or at any time, meet the subject of his admiration. When I sent him Housman's reply to his questionnaire I wrote to him: 'Mr. Housman has not been so communicative elsewhere—no, indeed!' In acknowledging this he added:

'If you think you may, without trespassing upon the bounds of discreetness, tell me some of the facts you know or opinions you have, about Mr. Housman, proper to help me to understand more fully that so enigmatic and attractive figure, I should be very glad indeed, and very grateful, for, I confess it, I dare not ask any more of Mr. Housman himself.'

To which I replied:

'I wish I could help you, but I do not see how I can. Mr. Housman has said to you more, I fancy, than he has said to

anybody else, and for me to try to step in now with a few observations, which would surely be from your point of view irrelevant, about his life, and so on, would be a mistake and I cannot help thinking, an impertinence. The note of Mr. Housman's character is his reticence, and it would ill become one of his friends and admirers to attempt to pierce it. I am very glad you have decided that you will not yourself write him any more questions. Later on, when the essay is complete, you may be able to publish it either in France or England, or both, and then perhaps, if you entrust proofs to me, I may be able to get him to add a little to your knowledge.'

Months passed and then on September 23, 1933, Maurice Pollet writes:

'You will find enclosed along with this letter an essay on Mr. A. E. Housman. As it stands, it contains the essential matter extracted from the 1st Part of the small work which I presented last summer (successfully, I must say) before the University of Paris. I thought that an essay would be more handy than the original work which, though of little bulk, was achieved according to the scholastic rules of the University. Besides, if you think it may interest English readers, it will suit this purpose better in such a form.

'Perhaps you will deem it advisable to show this essay to Mr. Housman himself. I hope he will not raise too momentous objections to it!'

Maurice Pollet's considerable success, I have shown, enabled him to carry out his intention of writing a paper on Housman's work. As I have said, he sent it to me and I sent it on to Housman, asking him, at the request of his French admirer, if he would have any objection to a translation of it appearing in an English paper. He replied from Trinity on September 28, 1933:

'M. Pollet's essay, which I return, is certainly complimentary, and is not silly, and I should not raise objections, "momentous" or otherwise, to its publication in an English paper, though I imagine he would find this difficult, and have no wish that he should succeed.

'I am still in very poor health. Just when I went to France I was seized by a form of influenza which has been prevalent here, starting with a violently painful inflammation of the throat and leaving the victim in a state of feebleness and fatigue in which I still continue, with very low spirits. You would therefore find me wretched company, and I cannot honestly recommend you to come. On the other hand if I were selfish I should be glad to see you, because your company might do me good; and I should be at liberty any day next week except the Saturday.'

To Monsieur Pollet I reported the result of my letter, suggesting that he should translate his paper into English and offer it to the *London Mercury*. Whether he did so I do not know, but he replied to me with all a Frenchman's politeness: 'I am glad Mr. A. E. Housman was not too hard with me, knowing so well how little he thinks of "critics".' In France his paper was printed in September 1937 in the fifth issue of the first year of *Études Anglaises*, a magazine that appeared under the editorial presidency of the Comtesse de Chambrun and MM. E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, Professors at the Sorbonne.

On March 16, 1933, having been asked whether he will allow Mr. Andrew L. Cairncross to print, in an anthology that he was preparing for 'The Scholar's Library', 'Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries' from *Last Poems*, Housman replies:

'I have generally allowed anthologists to have the *Epitaph* but I am getting out of patience with this endless procession of anthologies, and I refuse my permission.'

In March the fact that Housman was to deliver at Cambridge the Leslie Stephen Lecture led me to write to him that it would be a great feather in my cap if I could publish it. I asked him to come up and stop for a day or two; and I also asked him where I should find the story of the would-be lover who got even with a scornful lady by sprinkling

her dress with a certain scent. He replies on March 28, 1933:

'Your invitation is very kind and pleasant, but I dare not accept it. Until I have broken the back of that infernal lecture I have no time for anything else.

'I have promised our University Press to let them publish it, as they regularly do these lectures.

'I don't think the story is in Rabelais, whom I have read. Of Balzac I have only read a small fraction; but I don't think it is in the Contes Drolatiques.'

This was quickly followed by a postcard dated April 1: 'I am told that your story of lover, lady, scent and dogs is in the Heptameron.'

Naturally I must be at the Lecture. On April 20 he tells me about it:

'The lecture is at 5 o'clock on May 9 in the Senate-House. So far as I remember, no tickets are required for the Leslie Stephen Lecture, but I will enquire.

'I shall not be able to offer you any hospitality, as I have to dine with the Vice-Chancellor.'

And on April 26: 'There are no tickets, but the enclosed will admit you to places which are reserved down to 4.55.' The enclosure was a card of admission to the Senate-House for the Leslie Stephen Lecture on May 9, signed by 'A. E. Housman, Member of the Senate'.

The lecture over, I walked round to his rooms and was depressed by his evident fatigue. At the end of the month I was with him again when the parcel arrived containing copies of the lecture, *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, and he passed one of them over to me: 'You'd like this, perhaps.'

'Of course—but please inscribe it to me.'

'I'm damned if I will. I don't like the lecture. It gave me a great deal of trouble. I was over-persuaded into writing

it. I wrote every line against my will. I shall inscribe no copy to any one.'

Nevertheless, the lecture had a great success, both in the Senate-House and in book form. On the day following its delivery *The Times* had a longish 'leader' about it—'What is Poetry?'—and a report starting on the 'leader' page, running to a column and a half of large and small type. And it had a similar success in America.¹ It is an interesting commentary on this last fact that just before the lecture I had written to Housman that a Miss Shirley Pratt, a student at the University of Minnesota, had addressed to me a letter in which she said that she had chosen him as a poet on whom to write a paper for the 'term assignment', and that she could find no material except what was in *Who's Who*. 'She seems anxious for any kind of assistance. . . . Shall I give her any information?'

An immediate reply, dated April 22:

'I strictly enjoin you to tell Miss Shirley Pratt nothing. The sham education given at American Universities has resulted in my receiving about half-a-dozen similar enquiries from its victims.'

In September, some obstacle having prevented my going at once to Cambridge, Housman writes again on October 17:

'I am very sorry you have been having the same sort of trouble as I. Come by all means when you are well enough. I am rather better now.'

Actually, I went on October 27. I have a note in my engagement book: 'To Cambridge to see A.E.H.: he has been ill. Lunched and dined there. Heavy snow-fall on arrival.'

¹ I copy the following from the *Publishers' Weekly* of New York: '“The circulation of Housman's book has induced two of our library patrons to buy one new book of poetry each month”—A librarian in a library in a bookshop in a city of 20,000.'

Then immediately I must have written offering in some way to help and urging him to take advantage of some opportunity that had occurred to move from the rooms he was occupying to another set more comfortable and more convenient, for he writes on November 1:

'Your talent for practical affairs is only equalled by your amiability and readiness to help; but at present at any rate I do not look forward to changing my rooms as a likely event. If it ever occurs, I will certainly remember and take advantage of your noble offer.'

Although Housman's gastronomic interests had had, to his regret, to be in the background, I continued to keep him informed of anything in that way which was likely to interest him, and on November 15, 1933, I wrote to him:

'I went to the first luncheon of the Wine and Food Society yesterday. It was very crowded. Hardly anybody looked as if he cared what he ate or drank—and there were women! There must have been two hundred people, but then there were a number of guests, this first meal being in the nature of a send off, when they wanted all the *réclame* they could get. From the gastronomic or wine point of view I do not think it would have interested you, unless you had happened to be sitting next to somebody like André Simon, or the Secretary, or Henry Armstrong. But I think the objects of the Society would justify your spending a guinea. I myself, however, have not joined, and do not suppose I shall do so. The next meal is in February, at the Carlton—Wine and Food of Touraine. . . .

'You will be interested to hear that Gioia¹ has had a novel accepted by Faber and Faber. They are good publishers, so I imagine the novel itself must be good.'

Reply on the following day:

'Your account of the Food and Wine luncheon was discouraging, and I was not much impressed by the menu, which I saw in the *Times*.

'I congratulate Gioia. I remember that she wrote novels, or a novel, when she was at school.'

¹ My daughter.

XXXII

TOWARDS THE END

WHEN 1934¹ began I was for the first time seriously perturbed by the state of Housman's health. Such letters as I had from him dealt only with those questions of permission about which I had always tried to save him trouble, and when I saw him it was clear enough that he was failing and that life was becoming a burden to him. A letter, of July 2, 1934, was not reassuring, although not in itself alarming:

'P. 5 is chiefly hallucination. I do not believe that I have ever entertained you at Verrey's. Anyhow it was in April 1922 that I first told you, (by letter,) that I should be having a book ready for the autumn.

'P. 6. The specimen pages did not exhibit any of the text of *New Poems*,² if I remember right, and I can hardly have sent you the MS. so early. But printed slips of the whole were in my hands in August, if not July.³

'I have been amused by a book called "Swan's Milk" by Louis Marlow, about Radley, Oxford, Cambridge, and literary men in 1895-1910, with minute personal details which I should have thought libellous.

'I am no better than I was at the beginning of the year.'

This was called forth by my sending him several pages of my *Author Hunting*. I have before me those pages with one correction in his own hand. Page 194 of this book will show that he had at least on one occasion asked me to dine at Verrey's and that it was quite soon after his first announcement of the impending manuscript, but, for the rest, his

¹ On May 25, 1934, there appeared in *The Times* a few lines of verse addressed to Miss Jean Batten which, as they were signed 'H.', were thought by many readers to be by Housman. They were not.

² A slip that Housman had made elsewhere. He meant *Last Poems*. See p. 211.

³ Within the first eight days of July as a matter of fact.

corrections were just. On that same day, July 2, he sends me a postcard, also in comment on my typescript:

'You had intended, until discouraged by the booksellers, to print 5,000 copies as a first edition of *New Poems* [*sic*]; I had advised 10,000: the number printed before the end of the year was 21,000.

'My heart bleeds when I read your account of the domestic scene at Cookham Dean especially for poor Geoffrey and Hélène.'

Therefore I cut out of the book the description of the 'domestic scene', for what I had written of the effect of a first reading aloud of *Last Poems* did seem a little exaggerated as my audience included a schoolboy and a girl of twelve! On September 21 he writes on a postcard: 'Many thanks for your book [*Author Hunting*] which I am reading and correcting'; and on the following day he sends some of the corrections:

'p. 28	Sedgwick]	Sidgwick
55	apothegm]	apophthegm
124	Auteuil]	Longchamp
128 n.	common]	combination
201	Danielli]	Danieli
219 n.	mnie]	mine
224	'I did not have'	is American
255	'reconcile'	is at any rate not English
271	There should be no	'à la' after <i>barbue</i> .

'I have told you already that your account of our first acquaintance is wrong: I called in Henrietta Street by appointment, and you took me out somewhere in a cab to lunch; and I first met you at Laurence's in Marloes Road.

'I have found your publishing intrigues rather slow reading, but the rest bright and entertaining.'

I have already (p. 20) dealt with what he says about Henrietta Street.

Then no letter till October 16, when he writes to express his concern at an accident that had befallen my son Geoffrey.

Nothing then till February 15, 1935, when Arthur Phillips, writing from Wesley College, Melbourne, has asked permission to include poems in an Anthology of English Poetry for Use in Australian Schools.

'I will not let my poems appear in school books. If you think it will soothe Mr. Phillips you may tell him that Horace felt the same dislike for the idea.'

On March 27:

'Your naval officer seems to be a person of some judgment.

'I am baffled by the allusion to a conversation between Gosse and Morley after Meredith's death.'¹

On July 27:

'J. and W. Chester Ltd. can have the permission they ask for *When I was one-and-twenty*, but they should give the publishers' name correctly, or rather they should omit it, as the publishers are not entitled to give permission.

'Thanks for *Gastronomic Italy* which is interesting and instructive. *The Wines of Italy* contains much inappropriate language.

'The continuation of my life beyond May 1933 was a regrettable mistake, and the bright side of the weakening of my health since the end of February is that it encourages me to hope for an earlier termination of the affair. The heart is regarded by the doctor as the chief culprit, but partly it is just old age and partly a nervous disorder.² I have been passing a quiet three weeks in the country.'

Tardebigge, near Bromsgrove, was the place of this holi-

¹ A story to be found in Sir Evan Charteris's *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse* (London, 1931). 'I remember', says Gosse, in a letter to Dr. Sim, 'having tea in the House of Lords, on the day of G. Meredith's funeral, with John Morley. Morley said "A dear fellow, and very bright, but alas! not founded on the humanities!"' My correspondent, Captain Weatherhead, had written me a letter in which Housman's work was dealt with at some length, and had aroused Housman's curiosity by referring to this story as 'revolting'.

² This nervous disorder was 'Cheyne-Stokes breathing', which sent him to a Cambridge nursing-home in June 1935. See letter to Laurence Housman printed in *A.E.H.* (p. 190).

day, and there all the surviving members of Housman's family circle met together for the last time. This meeting was followed in August by the last meeting between the two brothers, referred to in the following letter of June 30:

'It is kind of you to suggest coming to see me, but I think I am best left alone, though Laurence will be here for a week in the middle of August. At the end I think of going to France for three weeks, which last year seemed to do me some good.

'So many people have worse troubles than mine that I am ashamed to dwell on them; but the recurrence of disquiet and agitation every morning is wearisome and disheartening.'

On September 18, 1935, I wrote to Housman that 'one Willard Hougland' has asked me, on the note-paper of 'the bookman's club, kansas city, missouri', a question: 'Have you heard of the humourous poems of A. E. Housman? Do you think they will ever find their way into print?' With all his usual promptitude Housman replies, on September 20:

'I came back from France through the tempestuous air of Tuesday. I am, if anything, weaker than ever, though I had a good deal of enjoyment in Dauphiné and Savoy.

'Three poems, supposed to be humourous, which I contributed anonymously to the Students' magazine at University College, have recently been reprinted in a private and very limited edition by the English school there.¹ The poems which Laurence recites are mostly juvenile.'

A letter of January 20, 1936, shows now how near the end must have been:

'I was 3 weeks in the Nursing Home unable to answer letters. I am now back here and lecturing but with no strength for anything beyond my actual work. I am having your books returned and I thank you for sending them but I cannot bear to look at them; and I should not approve of anything of that

¹ These were printed on a private press that University College possessed. How permission was obtained for this Professor R. W. Chambers tells in his *Man's Unconquerable Mind*.

sort under any circumstances. I am not a descriptive writer and do not know Shropshire well.

'The chief trouble was digestive.'

The books he returned were published by Methuen. E. V. Lucas had sent them to me and had asked me to do my best to enlist Housman's interest and to obtain his approval for a similar volume to be devoted to the country of *A Shropshire Lad*. The actual books so quickly rejected contained the work of the illustrator whom Lucas proposed to employ. Certainly it was not the kind of thing that Housman would have cared to encourage.

Thereafter, not realizing how ill he had become but being anxious not to worry him, I believe I did not write. So that letter of January 20 was the last I was to receive.

But I did have one further written communication from Alfred Housman. It is very characteristic. The Editor of *Home and Country*, the organ of the National Federation of Women's Institutes, wrote to me that during 1934 and 1935 it 'had printed each month an example of the poems of the best modern poets. We are continuing this series during 1936 and have already had permission to reprint poems by Professor Lascelles Abercrombie, the late Harold Monro and Mr. Gordon Bottomley. In this series this year we should very much like to print one month a poem by A. E. Housman, and we think our readers would like "Fancy's Knell" from *Last Poems*. . . . We would be willing to pay a copyright fee.' Housman had not treated *Last Poems* in the same way as he always treated *A Shropshire Lad* in this connexion. His attitude has been made clear in his letters. But there came a time when he lost patience with the stream of anthologists and also took to refusing to have poems reprinted from *Last Poems*. He would have none of the National Federation of Women's Institutes; no doubt his refusal was prompted by his lack of sympathy with the

Feminist Movement. 'I do not accede to this request, A. E. Housman' he wrote on the back of the letter. That was on March 18, 1936.

We get a glimpse of this sad period in Sir J. J. Thomson's *Recollections and Reflections*.¹

'He continued to give his lectures even after his health broke down, sometimes coming from the nursing-home to the lecture room, and going back there as soon as the lecture was over.

'I saw him on the day he gave his last lecture. He was terribly ill and must have had invincible determination to lecture in such a state. He was taken to the nursing-home the next day, and died there on April 30, 1936.'

From 'The Times', May 2, 1936

HOUSMAN.—On April 30, 1936, Professor A. E. HOUSMAN, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, aged 76 years.²

Alfred Housman was dead, dead just at the hour when a new month of May was breaking on the world. He was a great man and, yes, a great poet; and 'he was my friend, faithful and just to me' and generous. Would that I had learnt more from his friendship, had gained more from his ever-patient wisdom.

The funeral service took place at Cambridge on May 4 in Trinity College Chapel. A chapter of Ecclesiastes was read and a hymn was sung which had been written by Housman and deposited 'in safe hands' for use at his funeral service. It was later printed in *More Poems* under the title 'For My Funeral'. This poem, whose first line is 'Oh thou that from thy mansion', is the last to which, according to Laurence Housman (*More Poems*, p. 71), a date (1925) is given in the Author's note-books and it is significant that the 'thou' and the 'thy' are printed with a small 't'.

¹ London: George Bell, p. 314. ² An error: 76 should have been 77.

The tune to which it was sung was not that suggested by Housman himself when he handed the manuscript over for use 'when the time came'. The tune he suggested was 'rather a commonplace one'. He used to say 'My taste in music is rather vulgar'. One cast about and found a better, which was submitted to him and which he approved. 'That tune was by Melchior Vulpius, harmonized by J. S. Bach.'

From 'The Observer', July 26, 1936

'The ashes of Professor Alfred Edward Housman, the author of *A Shropshire Lad*, who died on April 30, were last night buried on the north side of Ludlow Parish Church. At the graveside were a brother, two sisters, and Dr. and Mrs. Symons, nephew and niece.'

From 'The Times', Aug. 7, 1936

WILLS AND BEQUESTS

PROFESSOR HOUSMAN'S ESTATE

PROFESSOR ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN, of Trinity College, Cambridge, Kennedy Professor of Latin, who died on April 30, aged 77, left estate of the gross value of £7,923, with net personality £7,549. He left:—

To the Family Dining Club, in the University of Cambridge, all the wine in his cellars, for the use of the members: to his brother Laurence Housman, his books and MSS, directing him to destroy all his prose MSS writing in whatever language, and giving him permission to select from his verse MSS writing and to publish any poems which appear to him completed and to be not inferior in quality to the average of his published verse, and also directing him to destroy all other poems and fragments of verse.

The will states:—

I expressly desire and wish my desire to be made as widely known as possible that none of my writings which have appeared in periodical publications shall be collected and reprinted in any shape or form.

XXXIII

MOURNING

THE death of Alfred Housman brought from the press much more than the polite laudations that usually follow the death of a poet—or of a scholar. It was indeed treated as ‘front page news’, as an event of more than merely literary or academic interest and importance. The author of *A Shropshire Lad* and the editor of Manilius, Juvenal and Lucan had gone from us and life and literature and scholarship were poorer indeed. For Germany and in Central Europe generally it was the scholar who had passed away, but in Britain and in America it was in a much greater degree the poet whose work had entered so deeply into human consciousness who was so greatly deplored. The loss was deeply personal.

That loss was echoed in all quarters. *The Times* had a leading article of nearly a column and an obituary of nearly two columns. The article, ‘Housman the Poet’, begins:

‘Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

And, while his favourite tree is in perfect beauty, the poet has closed his eyes on that and all other earthly loveliness. It is doubtless unreasonable to grieve. Housman had no need, like his ‘smart lad’,

to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay.

In two fields where success is rare he had won glory that will stay so long as learning is followed and poetry is cherished; and though his haughty spirit despised notoriety, it could not pretend indifference to the satisfaction of being known among scholars for a supreme scholar, or to the excitement of being

revealed as a supreme poet. . . . At the core of him was something more than kingly. He had affinities with those poets of the Irish legend who condescend to the kings. . . . The future will have no excuse for supposing that Housman's poetry is a cold exercise of scholarship, or that his simplicity is the affectation of an over-subtle brain. His simplicity in the simplest feeling is genuine; but it has passed through his impeccable intellect to come out on the far side a purer simplicity, the perfect product of head and of heart together.'

Then, quoting the last stanza of 'Bredon Hill', the writer continues:

'It looks quite simple, and quite easy to write. Simple it is, but not easy. Perhaps in all Housman there is no more convincing instance than the last line of each verse of the well-known epigram that was his answer to the sneer about "an army of mercenaries". Of the fifteen words, all are monosyllables except one, and that one is the plural "wages". But there are no two lines in English poetry more intense and more tremendous. . . . It will be said, no doubt, that Housman is not a "great poet" because he has written no long poem. But his little poems are no carved cherry-stones. They hold in simple, imperishable perfection of form the simple, imperishable feelings of all humanity.'

I have not sought to pierce the anonymity of this 'leader', but I should, I confess, like to know the name of its writer.

The Times obituary was hardly less notable or less worthy of a more easily accessible place than the files of a daily paper, however august. It was, I believe, the work of three hands, and I should like to quote more of it than I can do:

'In his prefaces [to Manilius in particular] and elsewhere Housman mercilessly satirized and exposed fellow-editors of the classics; he pilloried them, often by name, in a kind of "Dunciad", for sloth, for not understanding their business, and for other critical crimes, such as particularly blind reliance on a single manuscript reputed to be "the best", or excessive respect for manuscript tradition. Many of those thus castigated

were German scholars; others were English; for that Oxford veteran Robinson Ellis, for instance, whose studies had lain in much the same ground, he had little respect. But to support all this brilliant and piercing sword play, so fascinating for lookers-on to watch, lay the amassed stores of an immense industry, the magnitude of which could be deceptively concealed by the disciplined terseness of the Latin in which Housman wrote his notes. . . . This attitude of his towards the greatest of English scholars is typically illustrated by his treatment of a passage in Horace:—*Rapiamus, amici*. Read *amice*, says Bentley, because the ode is addressed, not to friends, but to a single person. But, adds Housman, that person is not named, as all persons addressed in odes by Horace are: read therefore *Amici*, the vocative of one Amicius. Does the name Amicius exist? See this and that inscription. Even so, is the “i” long? See a Greek inscription where the spelling leaves no doubt. . . . In one particular department of erudition, ancient astronomy, he was pre-eminent; the preface to the new edition of Liddell and Scott pays him a handsome tribute for the unfailing resourcefulness of his help over the terms of astronomy. . . . “A Shropshire Lad” came out. Not immediately, but by degrees, it won acceptance.¹ . . . The Shropshire of Housman’s imagination is at once curiously realistic and romantic—a land of faerie yet of solid earth, somewhat like that depicted on the shield of Achilles in the Iliad. . . . The volume was written under the stress of strong emotion, the secret of which, it is understood, the author has deposited in safe keeping for a number of years.² . . . To the Cambridge undergraduates who heard them his lectures afforded the highest intellectual discipline. He would tolerate nothing that was short of excellence. It is related of him that, when on a visit to Oxford, he addressed a meeting of undergraduates interested in poetry. The poet

¹ Witness *The Times*’s own columns. See p. 6 of this book.

² An error: There was, and there is, no secret in safe keeping or otherwise. It is true that Housman in a letter of December 14, 1933, to Mr. Houston Martin of Philadelphia said: ‘. . . If I write anything of an autobiographical nature, as I have sometimes idly thought of doing, I shall send it to the British Museum to be kept under lock and key for 50 years’ (*Yale Review*, Winter 1937, p. 299). He possibly said this also to others, but, whether said in jest or earnest, no such writing exists.

and critic was hard to please. He was bombarded with questions whether this or that was not true poetry, but he appeared to be uncompromisingly negative. At last, when challenged to say what true poetry was, he cited the words "Hail, holy Light", repeated the entire passage to the end, and left the assembly. . . . He was a good raconteur, of the pithy and caustic order, and was by no means averse to gossip, nor incurious of the vagaries of human nature. He would sometimes surprise a party by a long quotation, made with rhetorical emphasis and gesture. But on occasions he would be so unapproachable as to diffuse a frost, and shroud himself in impenetrable reserve. He spoke freely of his views and prejudices, which were of an aristocratic, and even a contemptuous, order, but he was most reticent about himself and his experiences. . . . But he could not be called fastidious so much as impatient of conventions and stupidities. He valued confidence, but held back from intimate relations, and seemed to prefer isolation to giving himself away. It was said by his friends that he matured and mellowed much at Cambridge, but even so, it is fair to infer that his scathing tone of criticism, the restraint of his poetry, his irony in talk, and his tenacious reserve were defences deliberately adopted by a sensitive nature against the coarser and ruder incursions of the world upon his privacy. He preferred to go his way unchallenged, unpitied, and alone.'

To all of which I would subscribe, save that it lays, it seems to me, undue stress upon Housman's 'irony in talk'. Occasional irony, yes, but I should not say that in my own experience the irony was very greatly in evidence. There was no great show of irony when we were alone together.

A few days later—on May 5—*The Times* had a further column under the heading 'Prof. Housman: Appreciations', to which the Warden of Keble (Canon B. J. Kidd, D.D.), Mrs. T. W. Pym, Sir Percy Nunn, and I contributed reminiscences. The first describes how Alfred Housman, after leaving home, rarely came back without visiting the Warden's father, who was vicar of Catshill for nearly fifty years, Catshill being near Fockbury House:

'The one was a scholar, as all the world knows; the other a countryman, all his days. They always seemed to delight in each other's company; and the link between them, I think, was love of the country. Alfred knew by instinct what my father knew by experience—all that there was to know about country people and country sights and sounds; though otherwise their lives lay far apart. Perhaps the scholar and poet was not so lonely after all.'

Mrs. Pym wrote at greater length:

'Your obituary notice of Professor Housman has vividly recalled one of the rare occasions when he "betrayed passionate emotion in public". During my time at Cambridge I attended his lectures for two years. At five minutes past 11 he used to walk to the desk, open his manuscript, and begin to read. At the end of the hour he folded his papers and left the room. He never looked either at us or at the row of dons in the front. One morning in May, 1914, when the trees in Cambridge were covered with blossom, he reached in his lecture Ode 7 in Horace's Fourth Book, "Diffugere nives, redeunt iam gramina campis". This ode he dissected with the usual display of brilliance, wit, and sarcasm. Then for the first time in two years he looked up at us, and in quite a different voice said: "I should like to spend the last few minutes considering this ode simply as poetry." Our previous experience of Professor Housman would have made us sure that he would regard such a proceeding as beneath contempt. He read the ode aloud with deep emotion, first in Latin and then in an English translation of his own.¹ "That", he said hurriedly, almost like a man betraying a secret, "I regard as the most beautiful poem in ancient literature", and walked quickly out of the room. A scholar of Trinity (since killed in the War), who walked with me to our next lecture, expressed in undergraduate style our feeling that we had seen something not really meant for us. "I felt quite uncomfortable", he said. "I was afraid the old fellow was going to cry."'

My own contribution was to lay stress on the 'nobility and humanity of Housman's character. . . . I have known no poet and no scholar—and, indeed, no man—who

¹ Now printed as No. V in *More Poems*.

impressed me as so great and human a being as Housman did. . . . He was great and yet he was not chill; he was noble and yet he could unbend.'

I have not kept all that the daily papers said of him, but I have Robert Lynd's tribute in the *News Chronicle*:

'Sir William Watson once spoke of "the frugal note of Gray". Among the immortal poets few have been more "frugal" than A. E. Housman. . . . He was content for the most part with simple metres that recall those of the songs of Heine. He was sparing of imagery and of rich and recondite phrases. [Not always, surely?—G. R.] In his use of his simple materials, however, he was profoundly original. He ordered his unambitious words with the skill of an epigrammatist and, though the music of his verse was an echo from the past, he contrived by his genius to impose it on his generation as a personal music expressive of a personal vision of life. No one could mistake a Housman poem for a poem by any other writer. . . . He was a pessimist in the same sense as Hardy—Hardy, whose verse he censured, by the way, because of its "dreadful vocabulary". . . . That perfect epigram on the British "mercenary" Army.'

The *News Chronicle* printed also a short 'leader', while the *Daily Herald* had an obituary notice and a short 'leader', and the *Evening News* was no less sensible of the nation's loss. 'Beachcomber' (J. B. Morton) in the *Daily Express* said five days later in his 'By the Way' column what most people were thinking:

'The people who review the poetry which is being written to-day should read A. E. Housman, of whom they may have heard. If after reading his poems they can still praise the rubbish which they mistake for poetry, they are even less intelligent than I imagine them to be.'

Also 'William Hickey' (Thomas Driberg), 'Beachcomber's' colleague on the *Express*, had his wisecracks about the dead poet:

'In A. E. Housman, Cambridge don-poet who died yester-

day aged seventy-seven, elegant pagan melancholy was linked with fastidious attention to such details as punctuation.

'He announced that his *Last Poems* (1922) were to remain his last poems. They did—perhaps partly because a comma was misplaced in the first edition.

'Fear of misprints may also explain his reluctance to be anthologized.

'His suavity departed when he entered his own domain, the classics: he would battle bitterly if his reading of some text in Juvenal were disputed.

'Like most old-school dons, he liked good port.

'As a youth I owned a first edition of Housman's famous *A Shropshire Lad* given me by a great-aunt who had only bought it because she happened to live in Shropshire.

'Needing money, knowing vaguely that the slim grey volume was worth something, I took it to a London bookseller.

'He gave me £4. 4. 0 for it.

'A few weeks later I read that a copy in good condition (as mine was) had been sold in U.S. for about £50.'

There were, of course, many, many other immediate journalistic estimates of Housman's place in the history of English poetry. Dr. Percy Withers's article in the *New Statesman* was in the nature of reminiscence,¹ but I should like to print the whole of the Warden of Wadham, C. M. Bowra's *Spectator* article of June 19, 1936. I must quote only two paragraphs, the first and the last:

'The death of A. E. Housman has started a lively debate on the merits, or faults, of his poetry. But scholarship was his chief concern, and for it he has received nothing but praise. He deserves better. Praise so perfunctory shows a lack of interest, and Housman was a stranger phenomenon as a scholar than as a poet. By the time of his death he had won a peculiar eminence in the world of learning. In early years he had been the bad boy of scholarship, who made fun of his elders and embarrassed scholars by what were thought deplorable exhibitions of bad taste. But he grew old, and age brought, as it will in England, respect. The rowdy of yesterday became the sage.

¹ Reprinted here as Appendix I.

His paradoxes were accepted as dogmas; his casual sayings were circulated with hushed reverence, and he became a figure of legend. Even the Germans knew of him. . . .’

After examples of Housman’s critical habit and quality the Warden continues:

‘There is wit in these curses, but there is no fun. Housman meant what he said. He stood for an ideal of impeccable scholarship, and anything with which he disagreed was a sin against it. His anger blasted many worthy scholars. In his own sphere he neither tolerated rivals nor admitted compromise. The truth obsessed him, and he was convinced that he was more usually in possession of it than anyone else. He can hardly be said to have furthered the general study of Latin in England. His standards were too high, his tastes too narrow, for others to share them. But he satisfied himself. His work was the expression of his belief: “The tree of knowledge will remain for ever, as it was in the beginning, a tree to be desired to make one wise.”’

I must quote two paragraphs of F. L. Lucas’s *Mithradates: The Poetry of A. E. Housman* from the *Landmark* of June 1936:

‘Needing inspiration to write—an inspiration that often tore him in pieces—and extremely fastidious of what he had written, he naturally produced little. In that little it is not hard to pick certain holes. There is no doubt a sameness of tone; there is too much melodrama, throat-cutting and brain-blowing; too much about beer, soldiers, and hangmen; too much of that monotonously morbid death-wish which is a regular disease of Romantics. His peasants, we may be told, are too unlike any modern proletariat; his imperialism too like many modern dictators. Again, I could never persuade Lytton Strachey that there could be much good in all this stuff about “lads”.’

Then, after remarking, among other things, that ‘some of these charges, I think, stand; but so, fortunately, in spite of them all, does the poetry’, he continues:

‘But though Nature in her witlessness may not know, it will be long before posterity, even while it roars along its roads past the forest-tower of the Wrekin or the peace of Clun,

forgets whose footsteps walked there once; and from the dreary Roman tiles and drains and flues of the real Uricon, for long years yet, some will turn to remember the great Latinist whose troubles are now ashes like the Roman's, where in Bath the calm of the eighteenth century still broods over the greatest Roman city of the West.'

In America, in the *A. E. Housman Memorial Number* of Cyril Clemens's *Mark Twain Quarterly* (Winter 1936) several tributes to Housman appear. Here is John Drinkwater's:

'That A. E. Housman was a lyric poet of the rarest quality there can be no doubt. Inspiration is a dangerous word to use, but although his work was not designed on a large scale I know of no verse in our time of which it can more confidently be said that it was directly the product of inspiration.'

And here Lord Dunsany's:

Now from the hills that he had known
His way lies dark and long;
It is as though a bird had flown,
But left behind his song.

And from a note in prose by Lincoln MacVeagh I should like to quote one sentence: 'His poetry grips the heart and drains it of emotion'.

In the *London Mercury*, June 1936, E. H. W. Meyerstein has a tribute in Latin (of which an English version from the same pen appeared in the *Mark Twain Quarterly*):

Non modo cor doctum sed inexpugnabile pectus
Occidit: o caelebs, usque poeta, vale.
Nemo silvestri calamo meditetur amores,
Aut pastorali concitet aere viros.
Nos ad inassuetum vehimur post ardua portum;
Vix prae continuo lingua fragore sonat:
Sidere ab aeterno sospes miserere tuorum,
Daque tuo ut cineri solvere justa queant.

In the same number of the *Mercury* is a portrait of Housman in 1906 by Rothenstein.

XXXIV

THE GENESIS OF *A SHROPSHIRE LAD*

SOME of Housman's admirers have been troubled by an unpleasant element they find in his poems, an element of which, granted predisposition on the part of the seekers, it may seem possible to distinguish traces. Let me say at once that I who, according to Laurence Housman, was probably the person, other than members of his own family, whose intercourse with A.E.H. extended over the widest range of years, as his friend and publisher,¹ have not the slightest toleration for the suggestion implicit in much that has been written on the subject. To begin with, these writers seem to have found in the possibility at which they hint an easy solution of the riddle they have in great measure made for themselves. They had to account for something which they had largely invented and had certainly exaggerated, and they discovered that the theory they had evolved would apparently enable them to do so. The issue has also been somewhat complicated by the fact that allusion to what is hinted at is in the air, almost in the fashion. As far as Housman is concerned, let me say emphatically that in my opinion there is nothing in it. A mare's nest, if ever there was one.

Now in this case heresy received its first impetus from the idea that much of *A Shropshire Lad* had as its background some great and unusual tragedy arising from a deep friendship between two young men. Yes, the book seems to have that element. We need not dispute that. We cannot. The truth is that this thread of devotion of fellow to fellow shows itself again and again in *A Shropshire Lad* and its successors, but there is not the smallest reason for deducing

¹ A.E.H., p. 12.

from it anything discreditable to the poet. A sinister twist has been given to the facts, and my endeavour must be to bring them back to reason, straightness and health, to replace ill-founded gossip by truth. Calumny undealt with may sear Virtue itself.

Criticism of this kind did not rear its head until reviewers were dealing with the posthumous collections of Housman's poems and with Laurence Housman's memoir of his brother. At the time when *A Shropshire Lad* was first reviewed, and for a long time afterwards, this spying out of evil, this ugliness of surmise, was not a habit of English criticism or of English speech; but, now that it has come from quarters of considerable importance and has fastened on *A Shropshire Lad*, I feel it my duty, as far as I am able, to do away with it once and for all. Posterity should not have that bone to pick.

In the opinion of one of the reviewers of Laurence Housman's *A.E.H.*, that memoir contains

'not nearly enough to prevent less discreet, less informed persons from making A. E. Housman the subject of elaborate psychological studies. Since A. E. Housman himself indicated, in later life, that his first book of poems was the consequence of an exceptional emotional excitement, it is surely a grave omission for a biographer, however reticent, however brief in his record, to tell us nothing about the personal history behind one of the best-known books of late Victorian poetry. . . . It is natural then that the student of poetry should wish to know what kind of life was led by this poet who found life so bitter and unfruitful a thing. He will not get much help from Mr. Laurence Housman. . . . It is on the whole a melancholy record . . . the whole impression is one of frustration, nervous secrecy, morbid and melancholy self-torment.'

This review appeared, a full column and a half, unsigned, in the *Church Times* of December 3, 1937. I wrote, through the Editor, to its author, and found him (as I expected) to

be a man of competence and sympathy, a critic of distinction. I received from him a frank reply, and he said to me much that he would have liked to put down in the article. He asked me, not expecting a reply, a dozen questions about Housman's life and character. He dealt with what rightly or wrongly he considered the implications of Laurence Housman's book and ended: 'I can see that a study of Housman's character would have to deal obliquely with such problems; but they should be dealt with, or left severely alone.'

I protest that there is not the slightest need to deal with Housman's character 'obliquely'. There is no single thing that I observed during my forty years of association with him that cannot be told openly; and it is plain for me to see that Laurence Housman's so-called reticence comes from the complete absence of any circumstance in his brother's life that it might be deemed advisable to conceal. It is not Laurence Housman's fault if critics refuse to believe that the weight of home troubles and scholastic disaster were enough to warp the whole fibre of that sensitive brother's being, even apart from mental struggles which made him abandon his religious beliefs.

The same trend of criticism appeared in another review of importance, from the pen of Desmond Shawe-Taylor in the *New Statesman* of January 1, 1938, and, naturally, in the pages of the *New Statesman* Mr. Shawe-Taylor could be franker than his fellow critic had been in the *Church Times*. He too finds that Laurence Housman tells too little, and he proceeds to make conjectures of his own about A. E. Housman's life:

'He was caught in the net of a triple disaster, such as might well have brought so sensitive a youth to the brink of suicide: academic disgrace, some not wholly explained financial trouble, and a passionate friendship that turned out ill.'

He quotes two stanzas of 'Because I liked you better than suits a man to say',¹ and continues:

'Is it a coincidence that the greater part of *A Shropshire Lad* was written in the year, almost in the month, of the Wilde trial? Little though he had in common with the gay and flamboyant Oscar, the horror of his downfall cannot but have made a profound impression on him. People have often wondered at the constant association, in Housman's poetry, of passion and shame, at the surprising number of gallows and lovers' graves scattered over his imaginary Shropshire. Surprise is lessened if we suppose that from Wenlock Edge he could see as far as Reading Gaol.'

Undoubtedly the mention of Oscar Wilde in immediate conjunction with a supposed 'passionate friendship that turned out ill' puts a stigma on Housman's reputation that is entirely unwarranted. In the notorious instance of Oscar Wilde both the Housman brothers made no secret of their compassion for a stricken man in the disgrace and agony that he brought on himself; and it should be taken for granted that A. E. Housman's unbounded abhorrence for the workings of 'the laws of God, the laws of man'² would lead him to be very tolerant towards all unhappy men who become entangled in the meshes of sin and crime. He could extend his pity to them without being a sinner or a criminal himself.

Martin Cooper, in an article 'Sunt Lacrimae Rerum' in the *London Mercury* of January, 1937, was one of the critics who found reason to attribute to Housman a distorted nature discovered through the medium of his poems. He compared Housman as scholar and poet and pessimist with Leopardi:

'Both were in many ways cut off from the ordinary life of the world—Leopardi by his physical deformity (he was hunch-backed) and Housman by some less patent but no less torturing

¹ XXXI in *More Poems*.

² XII in *Last Poems*.

psychological twist which filled him with a hatred for women and arrested his emotional concentration on a youthful ideal of passionate and romantic friendship which excluded sexual love in its ordinary manifestations. . . . Repressed passion has turned sour.'

Where any justification for this statement can be found, either in Housman's life or in his poems, it is hard to say. If his poems are taken as evidence it should be remembered that it was at the age of thirty-six that his output of poetry came, after a youth devoted to a splendid achievement in scholarship which demanded both resolution and fortitude. Even the earliest of the poems were written by a Professor of Latin, not by a callow youth with nothing but his own emotions to record.

A final quotation from a review of *More Poems* by Desmond MacCarthy in the *Sunday Times* of October 25, 1936: ' . . . Housman himself was austere in diction, never in feeling. Sometimes an excess of it appeared in his poems, despite the moderation of their tone—an aegritude of passionate longing, regret, self-pity, and of the sympathy which is itself a projection of self-pity. These are features most unstoical. It is strange, too, how often he saw the emblem of his own emotional life in an outcast, a youth condemned by other men to die in shame, and yet not strange once we suppose intense life came to him in the guise of "the love that dares not speak its name".'

There is no need to suppose any such thing; it is all part of the edifice erected by certain critics on entirely false premisses. These critics seem to claim that reticence on the part of Housman's biographer justified any kind of conjecture on their part. And this brings me to face my own duty. Surely the clear view that has come to me of many of the circumstances that encompassed Housman as he wrote his poems should be set down, if only to break the narrow view of those who have looked at one aspect of his life only, and have imagined others. Laurence Hous-

man has written of no complete biography being possible because no one person was cognizant of Housman's doings in all periods of his life. But few biographers have this entire personal knowledge of their subject. They have to collect. In Housman's case there are no blank pages. I deny that there is any trace of self-condemnation among his poems of sorrow, indignation, and, if you will, of self-pity. If he was morbid, it was from sorrow and indignation, from bereavement, pride, and other disturbing things, but not from self-condemnation in any disgraceful sense of the word. No one who reads all the minor memoirs of him that have been published can fail to gain a growing admiration for the poet's life. Step by step, the record is there, with every period covered from the time of his admirable boyhood till he died in harness, giving his last lectures when no longer able to stand and when there was only a matter of days before his death.¹ All his rather forbidding aspects have another side when they are examined with understanding, or when they are dealt with by associates who reached the natural core of the great scholar who could be so pitilessly cruel in his words and so kind in his deeds. The printed records include articles by those who shared his daily life in his home, at Oxford, in London, and at Cambridge. The sparse register of his first years of toil in London hardly needs enlarging: he may have worked 'as little as possible' at the Patent Office, but in the hours that remained after its doors were closed for the day he must have laboured like a slave. And I have given, as no one else can, a record of how he bore himself in the business relations that passed between us, and in the holidays spent abroad which I shared with him. One of the best tributes that I can pay to his character is to say that in the many years that I knew him it never occurred to me to

¹ See p. 283.

suspect any deviation from a perfectly normal, 'respectable', and responsible way of life, or to suppose that anything else might be dug out of his poems. More recently, moreover, I have asked certain of his friends in Cambridge and elsewhere whether they ever observed the slightest sign of the leanings of which he is suspected. Never has their response supported the accusation. 'I can imagine no man less likely', I was told in one quarter. And it is natural that I, Housman's friend for so many years, should, since these conjectures have appeared, have searched my memory very diligently for the slightest evidence that might, had it existed, have been drawn from his appearance or from the method of his life or from his associates. Look with your memory's eye, if you ever saw him, at the wiry frame of that man, at the lines and contours of his head. Had that man the failing now fastened on him? I swear not. Had he associates of whom such things could be said? No—not more than can be said of any one of us who mix in this fallible world. Indeed, to some men his bearing, produced by his whole mode of life, actually suggested 'old-maidishness'. There is humorous truth to those who knew him in A. C. Benson's quip that he 'appeared to be descended from a long succession of maiden aunts'.

I must however guard against the idea that I wish to present my friend as a prig or a prude. Those who knew him well and those who have sat happily with him at table would laugh at me if I attempted anything of the kind. I am content to say that he was patently clean-minded, and that he was clean-tongued and, by temperament, generally aloof from grossness. But he could laugh at a good story with the most robust of his fellows,¹ and he had his

¹ Of course he could laugh at a good story, although I, who have a poor memory for such things, cannot recall his ever having one to tell. In *A.E.H.* his brother quotes the doctor who attended him in his last illness: '... Then,

curiosities. If men are to be punished for indulgence in those curiosities who shall escape whipping? In its obituary notice *The Times* wrote of him as having 'a rich appreciation of humour, not necessarily of the most academic kind, and a laugh which betokened a great capacity for enjoyment'. A very human character in fact! He had read his Casanova; he had taken a little trouble to procure Frank Harris's forbidden works, and those horrible and unhappy letters of Frederick Baron Corvo. He made acquaintance with Lady Chatterley. Coulson Kernahan has put it on record¹ that when Kernahan's review of Edmund Gosse's *Algernon Charles Swinburne* appeared Gosse wrote to him: 'You think that I have been indiscreet! Well, A. E. [Housman] by the same post tells me that my book is utterly ruined because I have suppressed the details of Swinburne's drunkenness and erotic peculiarities.'² None of these things is surprising and they certainly do not argue an undue or unusual interest in matters of the kind. He had in fact—to use the word again—the ordinary curiosity. That it was not excessive, I feel certain. And my certitude is borne out by the fact that in the many days that I spent in arranging his modern (as distinct from his classical) library, I found it a library entirely seemly and creditable to a scholar whose interests were normal and widely spread. A further evidence of the healthy nature of the functioning

to cheer him up just before I left, I told him a thoroughly naughty story. He was very weak, but he threw his head back, laughing heartily. "Yes, that's a good one," he said, "and to-morrow I shall be telling it again on the Golden Floor." And lest any Victorian reader of this note may think that to laugh at 'a good story' or at the full-blooded humour of an after-dinner anecdote or an Edwardian jest is a sign of moral turpitude, let me cite two English writers of standing. Of E. V. Lucas his daughter has just written: 'He could also be amused by what was coarse, only . . . it had to be witty as well.' And St. John Ervine (in the *Observer*, February 11, 1939): ' . . . Honest pornography, natural vulgarity, are delightful. . . . I . . . acknowledge without the slightest sense of shame my delight in libidinous lyrics.'

¹ *John O'London's Weekly*, January 8, 1937.

² See p. 384.

of Housman's brain is provided by succeeding paragraphs from his brother's Memoir (p. 91):

'He enjoyed telling the truth provocatively. And he did this not only when dealing with persons but with things in general and with morals in particular, illustrative of which was his remark (I believe that Anatole France made a similar pronouncement) that the rarest of sexual aberrations is chastity. It is quite true, but it could hardly be said in a more provocative way.

'Equally aggressive was his statement that morality, like religion, is chiefly prized by men as an excuse for making others unhappy.'¹

In personal conduct Housman's fastidiousness can be illustrated by the accounts of more than one woman student at University College of his having relieved them of embarrassment when certain passages in the classics fell to them for translation.²

Finally, here, where I have been, in effect, considering Housman's character, let me note a sentence in his *Introductory Lecture*:

'It is and it must in the long run be better for a man to see things as they are than to be ignorant of them; just as there is less fear of stumbling or of striking against corners in the daylight than in the dark.'³

¹ Such opinions came from one side of his character. Sir John Squire, who knew Housman—they spent a day or two, a week-end, I think, together in my house in November 1918, when I was ill in bed, and they must have talked a good deal—Sir John, in reviewing *More Poems* for the *Daily Telegraph*, October 26, 1936, said: 'His philosophy was not every man's, but he was utterly honest, anguished because "men loved unkindness" and unable, though a naturally Christian soul, to find consolation.'

² Thus Miss Savory (whom I quote elsewhere) in the *Birmingham Post*, June 22, 1937: 'When he read Catullus it was with an obvious pleasure in the love lyrics to Lesbia; but with unmoved dignity he would sometimes say: "The next song is too sensuous to read here. I shall omit it."'

³ *Introductory Lecture delivered before the Faculties of Arts and Laws and of Science in University College, London, October 3, 1892* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1937), p. 38. This Lecture was privately printed in 1892 for the College, and again, to quote Housman, 'in 1933 by two young men

I feel myself that a reading of that Lecture is essential as an introduction to any study of the man Housman. And yet he described it to Houston Martin as 'rhetorical and not wholly sincere', adding that he himself 'cared very little about it'.¹ Desmond MacCarthy has something to say about this dislike in his review of the Lecture in the *Sunday Times*, April 18, 1937:

'The only explanation possible seems to be that since he was speaking on the theme about which he felt most passionately, he could not forgive himself for having also used it as an opportunity for exhibiting that intellectual elegance of mind with which he was so richly endowed.'

My personal testimony is, of course, confined to Housman's life after it came to maturity, but all the evidence goes to show that it had succeeded a youth of an unusually blameless character. Referring to the 'net of a triple disaster' in which the *New Statesman* critic supposes Housman to have been caught in his youth, it is easy, in order to postulate something more serious in the background, to belittle the profound effect on his life made by his 'academic disgrace' and the stress of 'financial trouble'. I know that no other background than these two troubles was needed to change the tenor of Housman's life. The stimulus of his 'disgrace' was probably the stimulus which enabled him to achieve his supreme place in scholarship; but the self-reproach of it, which caused him to shut himself away from his own family till his self-respect had been re-established, seared him more or less permanently. No outsider

named John Carter and John Sparrow in an edition of 100 copies, not for sale. I shall not reprint it.' But reprinted it was, as we see above, but not till after Housman's death. The wrapper of the current, the Cambridge, edition declares that 'In it Housman propounds and answers the question: "What is the good which we set before us as our end when we exercise our faculties in acquiring knowledge?"'

¹ *The Yale Review*, Winter, 1937, pp. 288, 302.

has a right to pry into the severity of his home troubles; but there are frank revelations in Laurence Housman's *Unexpected Years* which show the extremity of economy that had to be practised by the whole family at the time when Housman entered the Patent Office and had to live in London on a yearly salary of a hundred pounds.¹ Such penury must have been crippling, yet it may have been a restriction that, by depriving him of every indulgence except that of scholarship, helped to turn him out the strongly disciplined man that he became.

As for the 'passionate friendship that turned out ill', such suppositions of the critics crumble away when confronted with the truth of the real attachment that illuminated and darkened by turns Housman's life and poems. There was no inferior attachment to that which he bore for the few great friends whom he avowed to be such—chief of them M. J. Jackson, a man slightly his senior in years. Jackson was a brilliant science scholar of St. John's College, Oxford, later on a Doctor of Science of the University of London and a Fellow of University College, London. Housman and he became close friends at Oxford,² though there was one great difference between them—Jackson was a fine athlete, distinguishing himself as a runner and oarsman, activities in which Housman did not share. By happy circumstance, when Housman gained an appointment to

¹ This salary was automatically increased at the rate of £37. 10s. 0d. triennially, so that at the time he left the Patent Office he was presumably receiving £212. 10s. 0d.

² M. J. Jackson, A.E.H., and A. W. Pollard, when in their fourth year at St. John's they had to live out of College, lived together in St. Giles 'in a picturesque old house . . . now long displaced by academic buildings'. A. S. F. Gow in his *A. E. Housman at Oxford*, a reprint from the *Oxford Magazine*, November 11, 1937, says that 'A. W. Pollard told me that in his opinion it was unlucky that Housman's great friend M. J. Jackson should have shared their lodgings in St. Giles', since Jackson's first in science was so secure that he could afford to be idle and Housman enjoyed idling with him.'

the Patent Office Jackson was already there holding a scientific post, that of Examiner of Electrical Specifications, and living in London with a younger brother, Adalbert, who greatly resembled him in attractive qualities. He was a student at University College, Gower Street, and became classical master at a preparatory school after taking his B.A. degree. Housman was made welcome to join the brothers in their rooms, and it would be hard to exaggerate what their hospitable friendship meant to him in his first forlorn sojourn in London, or how it enabled him to exist on his meagre income from the Patent Office. These rooms were at 82 Talbot Road, Bayswater, until 1886, when Housman moved to more open surroundings at Byron Cottage, 17 North Road, Highgate.

The association of Housman with the Jacksons can be looked on as, by itself, a testimonial to his character. These two men were not of the type to tolerate the companionship of one who had anything dubious about his life. His years with them fill in the record we want of the course he followed when he was plunged into the unaccustomed life of a great city. How did he spend his leisure time? We know that. In the free hours left to him after his Patent Office duties he was almost entirely absorbed in study that he might build up again the edifice of his scholarship wrecked by his failure at Oxford. Through this long-sustained toil he achieved the marvel of securing a Chair of Latin when he was qualified to receive only a pass degree! His recreation in London was walking, and in that he was sometimes joined by M. J. Jackson, as can be gathered from the Dedication Poem in the first Manilius volume.

Another testimonial to Housman's character at this period is to be found in Laurence Housman's *A.E.H.* (p. 92). Among his papers was found after his death a

letter from one of his fellow clerks in 1892 rejoicing over his appointment as Professor of Latin. This is part of it:

'It is funny to think how I used to chaff you about your work producing no money, and all the time you were working silently on, with that strength of purpose which I can admire but can't imitate. . . . As a rule English people never allow themselves to say or write what they think about anyone, no matter how much of a pal he may be. Well, I'm going to let myself loose. I like you better than any man I ever knew. There is, as far as I could ever discover, absolutely no flaw in your character as a man, and no one would ever hope for a better friend. I don't say this only on my own account, but I have seen how you can stick to a friend like you have to Jackson.'

Housman must have valued that spontaneous testimony to have kept it with other cherished letters to the end of his life.

So far, the history of Housman's connexion with his friends has nothing but happiness and content in it. How much he may have owed to M. J. Jackson's support in his time of distress we may measure when we know that in old age he told his brother Laurence, with emotion in his voice, that Jackson was the man who had more influence in his life than anybody else.¹ But the significant fact of the history is, that Housman lost the companionship of both these friends when he was barely through the worst of his troubles. M. J. J. went first. He was appointed Principal of Sind College, Karachi, in December 1887. Grief is not too strong a word to describe the effect that this parting had on Housman. Among the additional poems which Laurence Housman rescued from his brother's note-books there are several of a biographical interest, all the more valuable owing to Housman's statement that there is little that is biographical in *A Shropshire Lad*. One of these

¹ *A.E.H.*, p. 61.

cannot refer to anything but his first parting from the elder Jackson:

'He would not stay for me; and who can wonder?
He would not stay for me to stand and gaze.
I shook his hand and tore my heart in sunder
And went with half my life about my ways.'¹

Housman seems to have harped on this theme in other short poems of varying appositeness, and from some of them we are tempted to guess that perhaps the parting was more restrained on both sides than after-thoughts would have wished. One of them was quoted in the *New Statesman* review to illustrate the 'passionate friendship that turned out ill', though it is hard to see how the deduction 'ill' was made.

But there were to be many reunions with this old friend. The first came in 1889, when Dr. Jackson returned to be married; and Housman gave to the world in the poem "Epithalamium"² a frank statement of how he then yielded his friend to another:

He is here, Urania's son,
Hymen come from Helicon;
God that glads the lover's heart,
He is here to join and part.
So the groomsman quits your side
And the bridegroom seeks the bride:
Friend and comrade yield you o'er
To her that hardly loves you more.

Jackson's later life was spent for twenty years in India, and then for twelve in British Columbia, with occasional visits to England; he died in British Columbia in 1923. Housman's friendship for him was extended to his four sons, one of them, Gerald C. A. Jackson, being Housman's

¹ Poem VII in *Additional Poems*.

² XXIV in *Last Poems*.

godson, the subject of one of his Light Verses—XI in *A.E.H.*¹

There can be little doubt that this separation affected, directly or indirectly, many of Housman's poems; but the loss of his best friend was not the only blow that may have reacted on them. In 1892 he lost Adalbert Jackson by death, barely a month after his great scholastic success had brought him the prospect of a happier life. They never met to talk of the success, for A. J. Jackson died in hospital of typhoid fever on November 12, 1892. A poem dated, and entitled 'A. J. J.', was found among Housman's papers after his death, a poignant biographical poem that gives us a picture of this lost comrade. Here are two of its stanzas:

Oh, many a month before I learn
Will find me starting still
And listening, as the days return,
For him that never will.

Strange, strange to think his blood is cold
And mine flows easy on;
And that straight look, that heart of gold,
That grace, that manhood gone.²

This was written before *A Shropshire Lad* was published, but it had to wait forty years for publication itself!

It is hardly necessary to indicate the poem 'If truth in hearts that perish'³ as most probably referring to the one

¹ These Light Verses appear in Laurence Housman's *A.E.H.*, and not in the Collected Poems volume.

² XLII in *More Poems*. Another poem of pure biography concerning A. J. J. is number XLI in the same book. A. J. J. was buried at Ramsgate, the home-town of his family, where his father was Principal of the Vale Academy. It is to Ramsgate that the beggar in the poem is directed to go: 'And find his everlasting tent and touch your cap to him.'

For many details about the Jackson brothers in this chapter I am indebted to notes made by one of their elder sisters. Here too I may say that I have reason to be deeply grateful for much personal family information outside my own knowledge to an unpublished manuscript by Housman's younger sister, Mrs. Symons, which I have been allowed to use.

³ XXXIII in *A Shropshire Lad*.

woman whom Housman put among his three greatest friends. Laurence Housman has told us in *A.E.H.* (p. 24) who she was, and how sterling was the type of friendship between them. 'This, I think, was one of his most comfortable friendships', he says. Yet Miss Sophie Becker too went out of Housman's life at an early stage, when she was forced to return to Germany by stress of financial circumstances that he was powerless to mitigate. It is incorrect for Martin Cooper to say that Housman had 'a hatred for women'. He was certainly a severe critic of them, and preferred the unadulterated society of men, but he had women friends besides the one whom he placed above the others; and he had admiration for the work and qualities of several women of his acquaintance in diverse spheres of life. Apart from the friendships which I myself witnessed, the friends of his boyhood, whom he continued to visit at Woodchester almost annually till all of them were dead, were the Wises, a brother and two sisters, and their friendship was valued by him, in a quiet prosaic way, in spite of the fact that two of them were women. It might however be true to say that he had a real contempt for the sex, though not for individuals. Thus, he wrote to his step-mother from Constantinople: 'Turkey is a country where dogs and women are kept in their proper place. . . . Pampered and obstreperous animals'.

But how stupid it is for any one to imagine that all the poems of severed love must refer to a woman lost to him! When Housman was preparing for the publication of *Last Poems* he made a fair copy in his note-books of 'He is here, Urania's son', and next to it he copied out 'The rainy Pleiads wester'.¹ He did not publish the latter poem—it may not have satisfied him—but see how it fits, as a piece of biography, with his grieving renunciation of comrade-

¹ Poem X in *More Poems*.

ship. We need to put together the two versions of the poem, printed by Laurence Housman as Nos. X and XI in *More Poems*, to see that they express Housman's two longings at that time—for the country of his youth and for his departed friend. The poem, in one form or other, was copied more than once into his note-books, the first drafting, in the version 'The weeping Pleiads', bearing the date 'February 1893'. That was within three months of the death of A. J. J., which left him bereft of this other friend.

Every one may not be content to find entirely innocent griefs in what Housman described in old age as 'the very great and real troubles of my early manhood'; but it is my own belief that he had enough blows and sorrows in his own life to account for many of the heart-wrung expressions in his poems. As for the rest, we can take his own words as testimony that they were not the product of remorse or self-condemnation:

They say my verse is sad: no wonder;
Its narrow measure spans
Tears of eternity, and sorrow,
Not mine, but man's.¹

Students of Housman's character have reason to be grateful for the scraps of self-revelation provided by some of the poems that he did not care to publish himself. They do not so much need another sheaf of master-poems as a moment's sight of the spring from which flowed the scanty supply. The few people who knew him intimately can well conjecture that he despised some of his own emotions and assumed a steely exterior to hide them; but that is not to say that he had need to be ashamed of any of the feelings which he suppressed.

In seeking the genesis of *A Shropshire Lad* it must be permissible for any one to doubt whether the poems would

¹ *More Poems*, p. 14.

have ever been written if great personal blows had not fallen on Housman. If he believed the truth of what he told his sister in sending 'Illic Jacet' to her when her son was killed, that, 'it is the function of poetry to harmonize the sorrows of the world', we may certainly believe that he found in his poetry compensation for some of his own troubles; or even greater consolation if what I conjecture is correct. The 'continuous excitement' that Housman described in the preface to *Last Poems* as the urge which impelled him to write his former book has an explanation that covers the very particular regard for the book which he showed through all his dealings with me as its publisher. 'I can no longer expect to be revisited by the continuous excitement under which in the early months of 1895 I wrote the greater part of my other book, nor indeed could I well sustain it if it came': this passage from the preface to *Last Poems* concerns *A Shropshire Lad* more closely than it concerns the later book. It is important for the full understanding of *A Shropshire Lad* and its author; and it is provocative in leaving so much to conjecture. Time, which dims most things, has cleared the way for an understanding of the experience which Housman records as accompanying the writing of the poems; and the conclusion now offered is reinforced by every detail of his attitude towards their publication. The likelihood of any sensational revelation hanging on his words was shattered by himself when he told Monsieur Pollet that he never had any such thing as a 'crisis of pessimism', and that he did not begin to write poetry in earnest until the really emotional part of his life was over. For an explanation we must go to the facts in his life and character that are now well known. We know that he secretly yearned for distinction and fame from the time when the devastating blow of failure in Greats at Oxford fell on him, through his years of uncongenial work

at the Patent Office, and through a longer period after he had resumed scholastic work. His longing was to make himself immortal among scholars. Through notable classical work carried out in his spare time, he found himself a Professor of Latin in 1892, but when 1895 came his goal was still a long way off. The early part of that year was bitterly cold, and he was ill and depressed. It was then that he found comfort in writing verse, and verse that his critical faculty told him was good. We have it on record that when Sir Sydney Cockerell, many years later, asked him 'whether when writing the poems of *A Shropshire Lad* he had at once realised their merit, he replied that he had, because they were so unlike anything that he had done previously'.¹ This relates to the period when 'continuous excitement' developed; and one may form the belief that a sudden conviction came to him that he was producing creative work that was just as likely to make him immortal as his scholarship. To his temperament, one can believe that the thought would be exciting and stimulating, that it would produce an emotion that felt like inspiration, and a continuous urge to write—exhausting at the time and also in memory—an excitement, in fact, so exhausting that, he stated, he could not well sustain it if it came again. He *was* producing immortal work as far as one can judge; and it can be seen, through all his subsequent transactions with its publisher, that he did everything he could to promote its immortality. How greatly the excitement came with the poems, and not the poems from previous excitement, can be gathered from Housman's own indication that he was *visited* by the excitement as he wrote. It is a vivid illustration of the manner in which afflatus visits a poet; and there is every sign that he valued that particular book as though it had been a divine gift. He objected to making

¹ *A.E.H.*, p. 34.

money by it, or to requiring payment from any one who wished to make use of those poems. It is possible that among the pangs that embittered his life in his days of struggle may have been its rejection by the first publisher to whom it was offered, and the tardy recognition of its merit by the public which believed that it cared for poetry.

Examination into Housman's life history reveals a particular reason, not for excitement but depression on his part in the early months of 1895; and this must not be left out of account. At the end of November 1894 his father had died, infirm and broken, I am told. It was a death that did not add to the family troubles but gave release to its head from long-standing distress of body and mind. Its emotional effect on Housman need not be exaggerated; it cannot be compared to the effect produced on him by the death of his mother in his boyhood. Yet it could not have fallen lightly on one who was ever strongly affected by the deaths of those he knew, even if they were not closely connected to him. His short Christmas holiday was spent helping his step-mother with all the business preliminary to breaking up the old home and dispersing everything in it. I understand that the changed circumstances at home gave Housman no occasion to alter his bachelor life, rather the contrary; but it may have led him to review his new position as head of the family—without inheritance, without an heir—and have intensified his desire to leave a name behind him. Reviewing the whole position in the light of subsequent events, we, his friends, may be allowed to believe that in the sadness and excitement of 1895 he did beget *A Shropshire Lad* (or 'Terence'), offspring of his brain, and destined to act for him as progeny to perpetuate his name.¹

¹ It is interesting that Professor F. W. Oliver concludes his paper in the Foundation Number of the *University College Magazine* with this sentence: 'His genius . . . begat *A Shropshire Lad*.' It is I who have italicized the word 'begat'.

XXXV

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS

NOW, having dealt to the best of my ability with suggestions made by certain critics of Housman's work and by gossips, I wish to deal with the question of Housman as an enigma, a riddle. I have dealt briefly with that issue in an earlier chapter. In my opinion there is no great justification for the belief; or, if that seems to be going too far, then let me say quite clearly that in my experience and in that of many of the people who were closest to him or who saw him most often there was very little justification for thinking that Housman had, in essence, any other side to his character than that which he presented, consciously or unconsciously, to the more intimate of his acquaintances. I do not think that his was a very strong character, and I believe that he realized this himself. In my opinion he knew himself to be weaker than he would have liked to be, and he tried to make up the deficiency, to realize the ideal that, as a young man, he had set up for himself in circumstances that seemed to him even more unhappy than they really were. He knew himself to be *inclined* to self-indulgence, and he tried in many things to be austere. He knew himself to be wayward and self-willed, and he did all that he could to be consistent, all of a piece. Kindness was, I am convinced, an essential note of his character, but he came as he grew older to put on an armour with which to protect himself against the world which had hurt him twice, thrice, four times, and which he was determined should not, if he could help it, hurt him again. So he chose not to be intimately approached. And yet more than once his defences were breached. He would now and again admit the persistent if not to his intimacy

at least to his continued acquaintance, and when he had done so he would sometimes be patient with their questionings, their curiosities, their breaches of tact. But not always. When I asked him what had happened to the Order of Merit which he had reason to know was to be offered to him, he turned on me almost savagely.¹ He knew me well, knew that I was not given to asking intimate questions, but he resented this one from me just because he had forgotten that by a much earlier indiscretion of his own he had invited it. Others apparently had been, even about more intimate matters, less careful or more curious. Unawed by his silences and his reticence, they would ask questions that burrowed right down into the recesses of his mind and memory, and, taken by surprise, he would sometimes answer with all the frankness of which he was capable. Self-contained to an extraordinary degree yesterday and to-day, to-morrow perhaps he would be caught in more genial mood and confidence would well up almost unbidden. Some written accounts of such moments of confidence, of self-revealing, make one suspect that one part of him must actually have *wished* to speak out.

Yes, sometimes he may have had an actual longing to unburden himself. That is at least a possibility. Dr. Percy Withers² in one kind and Maurice Pollet in another elicited replies that no one else had been able to secure, or had tried (or dared) to seek. 'There is, as far as I could ever discover, absolutely no flaw in your character as a man', wrote his unknown Patent Office colleague when he left the Civil Service for University College, and it is unlikely that any man would have written so if Housman had at that time been enigmatical and *renfermé* to the degree of which he has

¹ See p. 253.

² See Appendix I and Dr. Withers's *A Buried Life* (Cape) which appears as these proofs leave my hands.

since been accused. And we must take into account that passage in T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*: 'There was my craving to be liked—so strong and nervous that never could I open myself friendly to another . . .', the passage at the side of which Housman had written the words 'This is me'.¹ No; Housman was no great, strong man, lord of his moods and of his heart, shut off because he knew his own greatness, his own superiority. He hoped that he was great, and he was great—but he had no sure knowledge that he was great. Perhaps always he feared that he was, to those around him, the 'small person with drooping moustaches (*sic* !) and an undistinguished appearance' that an anonymous writer in *The Listener* described a week after Housman's death. I may quote the passage in which that line appeared:

' . . . It was one of the characteristic things about him that he was disinclined to discuss them [his poems], or even sometimes to acknowledge his authorship. Guests at the Trinity High Table, especially if they were dining out of term, would often find themselves sitting next to a small person with drooping moustaches and an undistinguished appearance. He would be introduced as Professor Housman, and the excitement of being neighbours with such a distinguished man of letters might embolden them to attempt an opening question, not about the teaching of Latin, which was his professed occupation in the University, but about the beauty of Shropshire, or the significance of his English poems. Almost inevitably this would arouse an answer so brief and so biting that further conversation would not be attempted. Such experiences were frequent, and in uninformed and timorous circles a legend grew that all mention of English literature, of Shropshire, or of the poet's own work, would lead to an unforgettable rebuff. Actually he was an extremely shy man socially, and yet he loved society—though not that, be it said, of undergraduates, to whom he was often disagreeable. . . . His rather bird-like appearance . . .'²

¹ *A.E.H.*, p. 99.

² *The Listener*, May 6, 1936. That same anonymous writer remarks: 'He

I just do not believe what is said of his attitude to undergraduates.¹ As for the 'small person . . . rather bird-like appearance'—well, it is possible that Francis Dodd's admirable portrait² may give the impression of a small person and to that extent may bear out the *Listener's* contributor, although I do not myself see that defect in it; yet I can only say that, being myself nearly five feet eleven inches, I had never the impression, as we walked together, that my companion was even an inch shorter than myself. Bird-like? Yes, an eagle³ if you will, an eagle not necessarily of the majestic, but of a magisterial, kind—I thank Mr. Gow for that expressive and suitable word 'magisterial', although it was used by him in another sense, as applying to mental rather than physical quality. There was nothing mean about Housman's head, and nothing about his body to give an impression of smallness. Of that I am sure. Yes, of that I am sure, in spite of the fact that, within a few hours of my writing these words, Mrs. Gwynne Evans,⁴ who, some thirty years ago, had seen Housman with some frequency, and had walked and talked and played clock golf with him and who greatly admired him, told me frankly and without hesitation that the phrase 'a small person . . . an undistinguished appearance' did in her opinion not improperly describe him, although she maintained that in those days his moustache was too small to droop. Also she confessed to taking from their first meeting the impression that he had the appearance of a clerk. Well, that is not my memory

is also said to have taken pleasure in making Latin . . . as dry and repellent as he could.' This is wickedly untrue and goes ill with Mrs. T. W. Pym's letter in *The Times* (May 5, 1936). See p. 289. ¹ See p. 324.

² Reproduced as frontispiece both to A. S. F. Gow's *A. E. Housman* and to *More Poems*.

³ The motto of the Drakes of Devon, who were among Housman's maternal ancestors, seems peculiarly applicable to his disdainful attitude towards small things: *Aquila non capit muscas*.

⁴ Miss Hester Frood. See p. 80.

—not of the Housman who first came to see me, nor of the Housman who took up his Chair in Cambridge, nor of the Housman of the last years. And I have the support of W. R. M. Lamb,¹ who knew him first as a colleague, beginning his acquaintance at that Trinity High Table of which the *Listener's* anonymous contributor writes. (This contributor, by the way, must not be confused with W. R. M. Lamb, whose 'appreciation' of Housman, broadcast on October 24, 1936, was reprinted four days later in the *Listener*.) Mr. Lamb, shortly after the election to the Kennedy Professorship, going into Hall rather late, found that he had to take the vacant chair next to the man whom he then recognized as the new Professor. They had never before spoken to one another. Mr. Lamb repudiates entirely the epithets 'small' and 'undistinguished'. Rather he thinks of Housman as a man giving the appearance of ordinary height and having a distinguished and even noble head. My wife, in her turn, to-day describes him as 'very erect, distinguished, tallish, slim . . . he looked a scholar. A fine head, with fine eyes—the eyes alone suggested the poet. . . . His hands too were fine, an artist's hands. And, although his clothes looked as if he had had them made specially in the fashion of twenty years before, he always looked very neat. His elastic-sided boots, his funny little cloth cap, and his high-buttoned coat and waistcoat were alone in making him look odd.' It is true that she did not see him until 1915, but thereafter, over some twenty years, she saw him often and for days together. Her picture agrees entirely with my own, and I, in 1915, had already known him for eighteen years. Another man who had known him at Trinity thought him by no means small, and remarked, without prompting, on the beauty of his eyes. Miss Savory, a pupil of Housman's from 1900 to 1903, in some Housman reminiscences in the

¹ See page 341. Mr. Lamb is Secretary of the Royal Academy.

Birmingham Post, June 22, 1937, recalls him 'as a tall, slender, serious-faced man, who never seemed to see his class'. On the other hand Professor F. W. Oliver writes of his 'dapper appearance and generally benevolent expression'. I would also refer to Geoffrey Tillotson's description of his visit to Housman in his rooms at Trinity on January 5, 1935. It is to be found in his article, 'The Publication of Housman's Comic Poems', in the sixth number of *English*. One passage is: 'His face had a bucolic brightness, like a crab-apple, and its patchy red seemed that of a man whose skin has gone hard and red with weather. His eyes were quick and bright. His head, like that of an old man, seemed to be set lightly, even dancingly, on his neck as he approached me.'

So much for the appearance of Alfred Housman. On different men and women he made strangely different impressions. And as for the way in which he behaved to people who were introduced to him, I can find little evidence of his lack of courtesy, his almost brutality. Contrariwise. I have wondered rather at his courtesy, at the way in which, often, he would suffer fools with apparent gladness rather than show impatience. I was just now giving W. R. M. Lamb's account of the impression that Housman's appearance had made on him when they first met at the Trinity High Table. Mr. Lamb allows me to use notes that I made of what he told me of his further impressions—of that and of the friendship that followed. To begin with, Lamb confessed, he felt that he was in for something of an ordeal. The new professor's reputation—again the legend!—had preceded him.

Lamb apprehended not rudeness, but a certain prickly sharpness. Not at all. Housman, after some little constraint and difficulty, entered into conversation quite naturally about wine and food and the Hall. There were pauses. Then: 'You perhaps can tell me whether of the

company present any one is specially acquainted with the country round Cambridge.' Lamb looked about him: 'Well, there are not many regular walkers among us: perhaps I know the country as well as any of the Fellows, for I do walk about a good deal, and I ride too.'

The subject dropped. They talked of other things. Towards the end of dinner A.E.H. turned to Lamb again: 'If you care for walking, Mr. Lamb, I wonder whether you would take me for a walk occasionally. In my time I used to walk a great deal round Oxford, but I shall be at a loss here without some guidance to begin with.'

Naturally, Lamb acceded with pleasure; and Housman asked him to lunch in his rooms in the following week and, after giving him a good bottle of wine, they set forth. It was a pleasant talk they had and Lamb showed him a short cut near Madingley over land recently acquired by the College, a walk by a long narrow field where the trees made something of a broad grassy avenue.

Suddenly Housman paused and, looking about him, said: 'Now this is strange. I have dreamt often of this very place—and now I am here. This is the exact place of my dream.' They otherwise talked of Hardy and Bridges and others and Housman lamented that they all wrote, or at any rate published, too much¹ and, instancing Bridges, declared that his *Shorter Poems* contained his best work, some of which he greatly admired. He added that for Bridges personally he had a great regard.

Later, returning to Whewell's Court, Housman lent Lamb his own copy of the book, marked with his preferences.

There were other walks: they became in fact a weekly event for a good part of the two years of Lamb's remaining residence at Trinity (1911-13).

¹ See p. 341.

Lamb married in 1927, and, greatly daring, because of Housman's reputed dislike of women and of Americans—Mrs. Lamb was an American—took his young wife, unannounced, to see A.E.H. Housman seemed delighted to see them both, and lightly teased the lady with good-humoured chaff about Americans and their ways.

Later on Lamb and his wife were walking one morning about Beaune and deciding that they must get a bit of lunch somewhere, and then go to their hotel, pack and proceed with their journey. Suddenly they saw a figure ahead of them—yes, yes, undoubtedly Housman's. They had no idea he was in Burgundy. Turning he saw them and evidently was pleased. 'Why, you've missed some of the best things!' he exclaimed when, in answer to his questioning, they told him what they had seen and that they were moving on that day; and then he insisted on taking them to see his chosen spots. It became almost too late for lunch. But he would have it that they should return to his (and their) hotel and take their meal with him. In honour of the occasion a fine bottle of Meursault was produced and the best Hospices de Beaune the cellar afforded. In the result they almost missed their train and had to throw their things pell-mell into their suit-cases rather than to pack. The last thing they remembered was Housman's smiling face on the station platform as their train drew out, the smile seeming to say: 'Well, that's a good, a pleasant, thing done.'

Lamb added as a memory of Housman that one night, sitting in Henry Jackson's rooms after dining in Hall, Villiers Stanford was present. They were gossiping pleasantly and Stanford started to tell a tale about Robert Louis Stevenson. Thoughts do not always run clearly after dinner, and the narrator paused and became rather confused in his story. At last Housman, who had been silent and

looking rather impatient, broke in: 'With the characteristic inaccuracy of your race, Sir Charles, you have mixed up two entirely different stories and have missed the point of each of them', and he then proceeded to tell very briefly the two stories in such a way that everything was made clear; and he gave definite references to a book and a magazine. Stanford looked hurt and astonished—as well he might.

And Lamb told me one other anecdote: On one social occasion Housman, who generally avoided such celebrations, although he dined out with apparent pleasure often enough, found himself talking to a lady who gushed: 'And when, Mr. Housman, will you give us some more of your charming poems?' 'When next I have a relaxed throat,' A.E.H. replied.

I transcribed these notes of what W. R. M. Lamb said to me within a few hours of leaving him. I have not tried to polish them up.

A very much earlier memory is that of Canon J. T. Nance, from whose letters to me I am allowed to quote:

'I had very little to do with Alfred Housman as an undergraduate at St. John's. He lived a quiet student's life, reading hard, and not taking any interest in the general life of the College. His great friend was A. W. Pollard. . . . I think the only matter of interest to you will be my interview with T. H. Grose of Queen's after Housman had been ploughed for Honour Greats. He showed me his marks, one paper being marked E.

'Grose said that his answers on the philosophy papers were short and scrappy, and practically no answers at all.

'In fact Housman did not take any interest in Greek philosophy. His interests were in pure scholarship.

'I am glad that Oxford did recognize his scholarship by including his name in those who were honourably mentioned for the Hertford.'¹

¹ Cf. A. S. F. Gow's *A. E. Housman*, p. 6.

In a second letter, Canon Nance says:

'One thing I should have made clear is that I was not Housman's tutor in the strict sense. I was a Tutor of the College when he was a Scholar.'

Miss Netta Syrett is one of the women who had no trouble when meeting the poet. She was at the first performance of Laurence Housman's translation of the *Lysistrata*, produced at the height of the Woman's Suffrage fight:

'... After the first act, like the talkative individual I am, I turned to the occupant of the next seat—a man—and began to discuss the play which, fortunately, as it happened, vastly amused me.

"The translator is my brother," observed my neighbour, smiling.

"Oh! Are you A.E.?" I exclaimed, surprised, and delighted. "When are we going to have another *Shropshire Lad*, Mr. Housman?"

'He shook his head. "Never. That was"—he hesitated—"the springtime."

'We *did* have another volume of his lovely if heart-rending poems, however, and I am glad to have spoken to their author, *with whom, I may observe, I found it quite easy to get on*, though he had the reputation of being "difficult"... I never saw him again.'¹ [The italics are mine.—G.R.]

[See also Philip Jordan's account above (p. 43).]

But Housman could be difficult—although I doubt whether it happened nearly as often as is supposed. Here is the testimony of an old Trinity man, Evan Pughe:

Stationers' Hall Court,

London, E.C. 4.

17 January 1939.

'Dear Grant Richards,

'... I first read "The Shropshire Lad" on the Messines Ridge. A new officer—one of the staff of the British Museum, and looking it even in uniform,—said to me one evening, "Have you read this?", and he drew from his pocket a long, narrow,

¹ *The Sheltering Tree*, by Netta Syrett, London, 1938, p. 203.

red edition of "The Shropshire Lad". From that time I was a devotee to the great Housman.

'Within nine months of the end of the War, I was invalided from the Salient, and sent back to my old College Trinity to train cadets. There I found myself on a staircase in Whewell's Court opposite A. E. Housman's rooms. The officers of the Cadets Battalion at that time dined in Hall at the High table with the Dons. I sat almost opposite to Housman for about six months. In all that time I cannot remember him addressing a remark to me. After dinner the Dons and officers repaired to another room, where the marvellous port of the College was drunk, and it was after the port on my first night that I approached Housman and told him how much I had enjoyed his poems. To my surprise he turned to me and said (as nearly as I can remember) "The kindest action the Dons have ever done me has been never to mention my poems", and with that he turned his back on me. . . .

'Yours sincerely,

'EVAN PUGHE.'

And his attitude to youth? I have not seen him treat youth unkindly. Laurence Housman has written that 'he was always kind to the young when they appealed for kindness', and R. W. Chambers told Geoffrey Tillotson that 'Housman can suffer young fools gladly, but will not suffer old fools with equal gladness'. Certainly he treated my own sons with consistent kindness. When my son, Gerard, was killed on a Cornish beach he wrote that he was 'very much distressed, and not on your account only'; he showed interest in my other sons and would remember the things in which they were interested. When my step-daughter became engaged to a Trinity man, W. John Taylor, he took trouble to ask his tutor what sort of a fellow he might be and repeated what he was told with obvious satisfaction; and when, soon after their marriage, the young people called on him unannounced, he received them with kindness, and was only embarrassed—as any don might be—by

the fact that they brought with them a bunch of roses. He made them tea with his own hands. In the same spirit he received Pat Lawrence and another young Trinity man, Charles Taylor (now M.P.), who was taken to see him by that same daughter. And one must remember too the way in which he treated that 'engaging madman', Houston Martin, of Pennsylvania University, 'majoring in English', who, with so much success, while still in his teens, bombarded Housman with letters. Houston Martin provides another example of the manner in which, when ingenuously approached, Housman might unbosom himself.¹ A. S. F. Gow himself was still a young man when he first met Housman. Mr. Gow, by the way, says that though 'later study revealed the fine lines of face and skull', the man who was to become, in the French sense, his Master, was 'at first sight unimpressive'.

But I stick to the accuracy of my own impression.

And there are other accounts. For instance, that by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, which I have quoted on p. 105. And Mrs. Gwynne Evans, whom, when she was Miss Hester Frood, Housman sent to me in 1908 with a letter of introduction and whom I just now quoted, has given me an account of her first meetings with him:

'I met A. E. Housman first in the summer of 1906 at Woodchester. I lived at Woodchester with a friend for four years and I think met him each year until we left in 1910.

'At my first meeting we played a game of clock golf together at a garden party. I remember being pleased and amused by his elastic-sided boots as well as being thrilled at meeting and playing a game with the author of *A Shropshire Lad*. His friends, the Miss Wises, had warned us beforehand that we must not mention his verse, which we are sure now was a great mistake. We did not find him in the least alarming. He chatted quite easily with us, except once perhaps, when the

¹ *The Yale Review*, Winter, 1937.

Miss Wises invited me to go with them and A.E.H. a very long drive in a one-horse wagonette to some sort of garden fête. Conversation did not flow on that occasion.

'Another time I remember our all walking back from church through the fields. My friend and I were a little ahead with Mr. Housman and as we paused at the Miss Wises' gate he said in a low tone "Do you *like* those bluggy hymns?" Miss Wise joined us at that moment and asked what he was saying. "We were just talking of the weather" was his answer.

'But the most amusing time I remember was when A.E.H. was in a gay mood one evening at the Wises' house, when he read aloud his Operetta—as he and the Miss Wises called it. It is the *Fragment of an English Opera* given on page 242 in Laurence Housman's *A.E.H.* When I say read aloud I should say he chanted it, making the Father's voice deep and gruff and the daughter's high and squeaky.

'I asked my sister-in-law, who lived at Stamford then, what she could remember in the way of impressions of A.E.H. She too had been greatly interested in meeting the author of *A Shropshire Lad*. She laughed as she told me how, when she had quoted Tennyson's "Lord of Burleigh"—

Walking up and pacing down,
Deeply mourn'd the Lord of Burleigh,
Burleigh-house by Stamford-town—

he had bumped himself and his chair back quite a foot from her. We wonder if it was because he could not bear, as a great admirer of Tennyson, to hear such bad lines quoted. My sister-in-law thought that he was afraid that, as she could quote Tennyson, she might start quoting from his own verse.'

I asked Mrs. Gwynne Evans whether Housman had not said 'bloody': 'We are sure he said "bluggy" . . . We think that thirty years ago he might have softened the word "bloody" to "bluggy" as more polite to ladies!'

And I have too the advantage of the memory of Mr. George Udny Yule, of St. John's College, Cambridge. Mr. Yule first wrote to me on May 5, 1936. I had had the courage to supplement *The Times's* own obituary notice of

Housman with a note of my own which had appeared on May 5, in which I had written of the 'shy and aristocratic aloofness' generally attributed to the 'almost legendary Housman', and this note called forth a letter from Mr. Yule:

'... I am so puzzled by one point in your own communication to the Times. In 1893 I rejoined my old teacher at Univ. Coll. as his assistant and normally lunched with him in the refectory. As Housman lunched at the same time we met most days of the week, and this continued till 1899 when I left the College. During all this period my impression of him is that he was wholly delightful to a young man like me—with very little if any of that "shy and aristocratic aloofness". When I came here in 1912 I was shocked: he seemed a different man, walking solitary and alone with unseeing eyes that recognised none and repelled advance. When we did speak he was cordial but tongue-tied. It has been deep regret to me that here I have seen so little of him. But only a few days before his death he sent a most charming note—an acknowledgment of a letter of sympathy from me in his illness last Xmas. ...'

Then Professor W. H. Semple of Manchester writes to me:

'I was Housman's pupil during the years 1925-7, and later I often consulted him about points of Latinity which puzzled me and, when in Cambridge, I always went to see him. To his direction and criticism and support I owe more than I could ever express.'

No sign of unapproachableness there! Professor R. W. Chambers is equally definite on the point: 'His affability to his students was astonishing'.¹

The enigma is lessened. It seems to have resolved itself into the fact that the poet was a man of moods. 'Perhaps the scholar and poet was not so lonely after all', wrote the Warden of Keble, Dr. B. J. Kidd, in the letter quoted on p. 289.

On the other hand E. S. P. Haynes,² who met Housman

Man's Unconquerable Mind. London, 1939.

² pp. 157 and 240.

for the first time at the Trinity High Table some time between 1925 and 1931, tells me that Housman impressed him 'in the sense that he was out of the way serious, with an atmosphere of tragedy about him'. But we have to remember that before that meeting Haynes was possessed of the Housman legend, and may have found what he expected to find.

I have already quoted from the *Recollections and Reflections* of the late Sir J. J. Thomson, the late Master of Trinity. There is more in that book that I can make use of here. The Master is writing of Housman:

'He joined, in 1919, a dining-club of resident Cambridge graduates which met once a fortnight in term time, and of which I was a member, and he was very seldom absent from their dinners. I had thus for nearly twenty-five years many opportunities of meeting him, and after this long experience I think that his silence and aloofness were very much exaggerated in some of his obituary notices. It is true that from time to time he had fits of silence and depression; but these were rare, surprisingly so, in view of the pessimism of much of his poetry. He usually, in my experience, talked freely and, as might be expected, incisively. He held strong opinions on many subjects and expressed them strongly, and he was not fond of strangers. I always found him excellent company, and was very glad when I could sit next to him.

'His appearance and his tastes were very different from those popularly attributed to poets; he had nothing of the poet about him, except the poetry. He was careful about his dress, which was not marked by any eccentricity, his hair was short. He looked much younger than his years. I was much perturbed one morning when reading *The Times* to see that it was his seventieth birthday, for I had not sent him, as I should have liked to do, my good wishes on such an important event. He took my excuses in very good part, and said that I was not the only one who had misjudged him, for a few days before, when he was walking along a country lane, a farm hand who was driving a cart, coming up from behind, had called out "Hey,

you lad, get out of the way". He liked good food and good wine and was a connoisseur in both; in fact he was for many years a member of the committee which chooses the wine for the College. Housman took much interest both in wild flowers and in gardening: he was a member of the Garden Committee for many years, and for a part of the time its Secretary. This is a post of considerable responsibility, as the secretary is responsible for the supervision of the garden and the gardeners, and for seeing that the recommendations of the committee are carried out. He was a very active and useful member of the committee. He held very decided views, which in general seemed to me quite sound, about the desirability or otherwise of changes which might be suggested. He liked flowers to have bright and definite colours, and was very contemptuous of what are called in florists' catalogues "art shades", and which he called muddles.

"Though he was quite indifferent to distinctions and had refused one which many regard as the greatest which could be conferred upon them, there was one which I think he did appreciate: it was to have had a dish, *Barbue Housman*,¹ which is a speciality of a famous Paris restaurant, named after him. The dinners which he gave as a member of the Dining Club had, like everything he did, the air of distinction. There was always some dish which few, if any, of his guests had met with before, and over which he had taken a good deal of trouble to instruct the College cook in all the details of its preparation. All the wine was good, and there was pretty sure to be some of special interest or rarity. He recognised, too, the virtues of beer. Has it ever been exalted to such a height of dignity as in

Malt does more than Milton can

To justify God's ways to man?"²

The Master continues:

'In his lecture, Housman quoted passages from Shakespeare as examples of supreme poetry, but I have heard him say that it gave him no pleasure to read a play of Shakespeare's from beginning to end, for though some parts were magnificent, there were others so slovenly that the effect of the whole was disagreeable. . . .'

'He studied astrology when he was preparing his edition of

¹ See pp. 116, 445.

² LXII in *A Shropshire Lad*.

Manilius, and learned how to cast horoscopes. Astrology is closely connected with the motion of the planets, and thus involves ideas which are sufficiently mathematical to scare off the great majority of classical scholars.'

'His lectures were, I am told, confined to the text of the author he was considering and he did not discuss its literary merits. The one exception, I believe, was when he lectured on Horace, when he gave a translation of *Odes*, iv. 7, into English verse, and was so much moved by it that his eyes filled with tears.'

The following note, from which I have already quoted, appeared over the initials G.H.S. (initials I discovered were those of Miss Gundred Helen Savory) in the *Birmingham Post* on June 22, 1937, under the title 'Memories of Lectures, 1900-3'.¹

'I attended his [Housman's] Latin lectures at University College, London, from 1900 to 1903. I was one of the comparatively few women undergraduates of those days, and I remember him as a tall, slender, serious-faced man, who never seemed to see his class. There was an occasional flash of humour, sometimes so dry that we might easily miss it; there was never a moment wasted or misspent; and we had great satisfaction in listening to his calm, judicial pronouncements on the interpretation of the Latin texts we read—Livy, Ovid, Plautus, Lucretius, Cicero, Horace.

'A favourite phrase of his was "really and truly". He said it hundreds of times. We mocked it once in the college magazine. "So-and-so would translate the passage *thus*", he would say. "And so-and-so in *this* way, but"—the habitual phrase—"really and truly . . .". And we would wait breathlessly for the real thing to come. I kept my lecture notes for years; they were so convincing.

'He gave additional voluntary lectures, reading aloud with-

¹ See p. 302. Miss Savory is concerned to have "a silly impression corrected that Housman's women students were offended by his impersonal attitude towards them. The group to which I belonged had no such feeling. We thoroughly appreciated, and were inspired by, his attitude towards truth and scholarship and appreciation of beauty, as things far above the individual personality of the 'beholder'. It was good for us in those days of self-conscious women beginning to take the College courses".

out textual criticism various translations which he thought we should enjoy. When he read Catullus, it was with an obvious pleasure in the love lyrics to Lesbia; but with unmoved dignity he would sometimes say: "The next song is too sensuous to read here. I shall omit it."

'Of course we all knew that he was the author of *A Shropshire Lad*, which had appeared not long before. One of us parodied his poem, "When I was one and twenty". "When I was one and twenty, I heard the Housman say, 'Give nouns and verbs, and pronouns, In such and such a way'." The parody had some vogue, but no one dared show it to Housman.

'He read papers to the Literary Society.¹ In a paper on De Quincey he made some of us realise for the first time the poetic music of the prose. In a paper on Matthew Arnold he likened the poetry to a Greek temple.

'When, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, I wrote to wish him well, and to thank him, not only for *A Shropshire Lad*, but also for the memories of thirty years before, and told him that I had become a lecturer in geography, he wrote from Trinity College, Cambridge, saying that he remembered my name as a student at University College, and concluded with the words: "Nature meant me for a geographer, but I had to abandon the study on rising above the lowest form at school." Readers of *A Shropshire Lad* will know what he meant. The poems are full of a sense of place. . . .

'Those of us who listened to his paper on Matthew Arnold will remember how, as was his manner, he ended with a quotation from the poet of whom he was speaking. In his deep, quiet, unemotional voice, he read:

Far, far from here
The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay. . . .
And there, they say, two bright and aged snakes,
Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,
Bask in the glens or on the warm seashore,
In breathless quiet, after all their ills.
Nor do they see their country, nor the place
Where the Sphinx lived among the frowning hills,
Nor the unhappy palace of their race,

¹ See Housman's introduction to Arthur Platt's *Nine Essays*. Cambridge University Press: 1927.

Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.¹

A recently published book, Joseph Hone's *Life of Henry Tonks*, gives us glimpses of Housman which are valuable. Tonks was dining, in the summer of 1931, with Mr. Owen H. Smith, one of his patrons, in Argyllshire:

'It was an added attraction that he would there meet the, for him, magical A. E. Housman, who was to be a guest in the big house. Poet and painter had known each other faintly in far-off days . . . a man stern and sincere like himself and equally devoted to his calling. . . . In the drawing room he found Housman, very precisely dressed, and looking shy and restrained in a group of sporting men and women who had not yet changed. The dinner which followed should have been turned into "a myth" by Jane Austen; all Tonks could record of it was (with some shame) his own attempt to extract good things from Housman. Subsequently, on several occasions, they took walks together on the moors. Once they went twelve miles, Housman as usual in dark clothes and elastic-sided boots.'

In a letter to Miss Sargent, the painter's sister, August 28, 1931, Tonks says:

' . . . Housman is, I believe, the greatest scholar of the whole world and in the same standard as the greatest that have ever been. I find I get on well with him, he talks if you talk to him and is interested but very humble in painting. He seems shy and diffident, then without warning annihilates someone with a word or two.'

In a letter in 1934 to Lady Cynthia Asquith, Tonks writes:

'A. E. Housman's lecture [*The Name and Nature of Poetry*] is as good as a man can give.'

And on June 11, 1934, to the same correspondent:

' . . . I am the only person about here [Sopley] who walks. How A. E. Housman does his three or four hours' walk a day about Cambridge I cannot understand.'

¹ *Empedocles on Etna*, Act I, Scene 2.

XXXVI

INFLUENCES

PROFESSOR FLETCHER'S generosity in allowing me to print as an Appendix the manuscript of his notes on the poets who may have influenced Housman in *A Shropshire Lad* and its successors caused me to scrap the little that I had myself collected and written on the subject. Professor Fletcher has covered the ground. I may however note that on July 10, 1931, nearly six years after its appearance, I showed Housman this passage in an article by Edward Shanks in the *Saturday Review* of September 25, 1926:

'Stevenson was a better poet than is usually allowed and had the privilege of being precursor to one still better. No one, I think, but Mr. Alfred Noyes has noticed that the one discernible contemporary influence in the *Shropshire Lad* is Stevenson.'

He made no other comment than that he fancied his brother Laurence had spoken to him of some such influence being discernible. But the subject did not seem to interest him and we dropped it.

Hugh Kingsmill in *Skye High* has his own comment on the resemblance in manner—and matter—to a poem of Samuel Johnson's¹ and he went on to describe Housman as a 'diminutive Johnson—none of his tenderness or richness, but a great deal of his sardonic melancholy'. David Garnett reviewed *Skye High* in the *New Statesman*, November 1937, and, after quoting this passage, says:

'Ursa Minor, in fact. The likeness is greater than Hugh Kingsmill makes out—since he doesn't mention the bearishness

¹ The whole of Dr. Johnson's poem is printed in Professor Fletcher's appendix (p. 422), as indeed is the whole of Arnold's 'The Last Word.'

other authors of whom I had heard him speak in terms of appreciation. Certainly O. Henry was among them. He had a warm appreciation of Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, which indeed he claimed to have helped to discover as far as England was concerned; but he seemed soon to have exhausted that interest, for he had nothing to say about its successor, *But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes*, when I sent him an early copy.

With the classical room I was not allowed to interfere. My job was putting in order the books in the room in which he breakfasted and, sometimes, lunched, the room in which he entertained—a drab, untidy, book-littered room looking on to Whewell's Court. A large sideboard, a comfortable couch, a dining-room table and a few chairs were its furniture. I cannot remember in which of the two rooms he kept his cherished celestial globe.

But if I was to put the books in order I had, to begin with, to clear some of the things out of the way, and to empty many of the shelves so that I might have space to initiate a new classification. I had in fact to immobilize the room, to put it out of action, at least as far as the entertainment of any one else was concerned. Housman was very good-natured about it: he let me have my way. After all, I had volunteered to make order, and I must be left to go about it according to my own plan. Neither he nor I realized that, doing the work at intervals, I could not hand the room back to him till a month or two had elapsed. And we had thought that a couple of week-ends would suffice. My word, but he was patient!

And so I saw and handled most of the English and French books he had brought from Pinner and those he had added since he lived at Trinity. There were, to begin with, hundreds of books of verse, sent to him by their authors in the hope of gaining commendation. Many of these he

authorized me to drop straight into the waste-paper basket; but when they were the work of men he knew he would say that a place should be found for them. And there were some that he liked for their own sake. Le Gallienne I was to keep: 'He writes a great deal better than he's nowadays given credit for', Housman said. And there was a little row of the poems and plays of Witter Bynner,¹ his American admirer. And T. S. Eliot:² he liked to keep T. S. Eliot for the sake of that writer's work, of which he always spoke with respect, and also because Eliot had written, he said, sanely and well about Housman's own poetry. And there were, mostly in old and undistinguished editions, the poets of the past; the 1898 privately printed seventh book of J. W. Mackail's *The Odyssey in English Verse* was with them. The better critics too. Hardy's novels, but not many of them; and Stephen Crane and Arnold Bennett—he had a very high opinion of *The Old Wives' Tale*; and scores of old guide-books and out-of-date local handbooks, books on flowers and on astronomy and on architecture; and, taking up a lot of room and giving the impression of never having been looked at since it came back from the binder, a volume containing *The Times* for a whole year. This was a sore trial to me for it would fit in nowhere. Certain modern writers on politics and legal subjects pleased him too: for instance, E. S. P. Haynes, to whom he wrote in 1933: 'I had just been reading your book on English Justice [*Lycurgus*] and your gift is very welcome, as are all the letters of yours that I read in the papers.' The gift in question was *A Lawyer's Notebook*. There was, by the way, no copy of *Cranford*, which A.E.H. had, years and years before, described to his brothers and sisters as 'one of the nicest stories that has ever been written'.³

¹ See p. 24.

² See p. 246.

³ See *The Unexpected Years*. By Laurence Housman, p. 77.

I had another means of knowing what Housman read, for he gave me, at that time, two reports of the Trinity Book Club, one dated 7th March 1923 and the other described as 'Sale' of 2 March 1932, the sale in question having taken place in the Old Guest Room at 8.45 p.m. Each report shows clearly which member had been responsible for the purchase of each book. Thus, in 1923 Housman had wanted the two-volume *Life of Lord Salisbury*, Gilbert's *Old England*, Shane Leslie's *The Oppidan*, René de Gourmont's *Décadence*, Reinach's *Francia*, Philip Guedalla's *The Second Empire*, *Georgian Stories*, 1922, and *Through the Shadows with O. Henry*, by Alf Jennings. So much for his selection in 1923. In 1932 he was responsible for C. N. Boyle's *The Late Unlamented*, Graham Robertson's *Time Was* and Thomas Okey's *A Basketful of Memories*. Apparently he ordered fewer books by many than did the other members of the Club, but it may be supposed that he read some of the books they had chosen.

I have already written of his liking for the earlier Prousts. Colette and even Willy, too, Housman read, and with pleasure. In 1930 I came across Willy's *Le Troisième Sexe*, a book of 1927: 'Yes, I should like to see the book, the more so as I thought that Willy had drunk himself to death long ago and that this was the reason why Colette was going on without him.¹ You gave me some of your father's copies of their books', he wrote to me from Trinity on March 29, 1930. He kept the book a fortnight and then: 'I return Willy. A lot of second-hand stuff: such as scandal about Frederick the Great from the spurious *Matinées*, when he might have gone to Voltaire.'

I have already written of Housman's admiration of

¹ Henry Gauthier Villars—to give Willy his true name—died in 1931, aged 70. 'I don't seem to remember *Le Troisième Sexe*', one of his closest associates wrote to me, 'but then he signed so many books (that other people wrote) one lost count toward the end'.

Thomas Hardy: in his Oxford days A. W. Pollard says that 'among novelists his favourite was Thomas Hardy, and I think Hardy's influence went far deeper than Arnold's; but he read also Henry James, but with some affliction at his prolixity'. His opinion of John Masefield we have learned from his letters; Mark Twain he praised again and again to his American friends—he liked specially *Huckleberry Finn* ('the elegy on Stephen Dowling Botts is one of the poems I know by heart') and *A Tramp Abroad*; Edith Wharton he read, appreciated, and knew personally;¹ he told Cyril Clemens² that he 'enjoyed authors like' Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser (to whose work I myself introduced

¹ Cyril Clemens reports Housman as saying, on August 30, 1930: 'I have known her for a number of years, I saw her the last time I went to France, where she lives in one of the suburbs of Paris. She owns an old-fashioned house surrounded by the prettiest garden I have ever beheld outside of England. . . . Although Mrs. Wharton has been writing a long time and is now no longer young, I still consider her one of the leading American authors.' So far, good; but this is a passage in an article that Housman is said by Mr. Clemens to have 'read and corrected . . . every statement made has his approval'. I do not deny it, but the wording of a letter of Housman's to Mrs. Wharton on June 30, 1930, from the Royal Monceau Hotel, Paris, sheds a little doubt on the 'I have known her for a number of years'. He wrote on that day that he had heard from 'our friend, G. J. Lapsley' [a don at Trinity] that Mrs. Wharton would 'probably now be at home and might be willing to let' him 'come and pay his respects to' her. 'This I could do any time in this next week that might suit' her. The letter bore fruit for he writes again immediately that he would come 'with great pleasure' on Tuesday; 'but do not send to fetch me, as I have a tame motor, and the chauffeur is supposed to know all about the environs of Paris. The correct pronunciation of my name is Oozman: at least, when I gave it so to the commissionaire here, he said, "*vous parlez français très bien, Monsieur*".' Still this passage does not make it certain that A.E.H. had not some acquaintance with Mrs. Wharton in earlier years.

² The Housman Memorial Number of *The Mark Twain Quarterly*, 1936. It is published by The International Mark Twain Society, St. Louis, Missouri. According to the *New Yorker*, Benito Mussolini is 'the honorary president of the Society'. Mr. Clemens invited Housman to be 'honorary Vice-President'. Housman declined this 'reward beyond the merits of any efforts which I may have made to write poetry'; but added that 'it is a token of kindness on your part, and one for which I offer the Society many thanks'. The *New Yorker*, June 6, 1936, is characteristically amusing about 'Mr.

him although I refrained from making Dreiser himself known to Housman) while he did not care for Frank Stockton. 'I get more enjoyment', he said—also to Cyril Clemens—'from Edna Saint Vincent Millay¹ than from either Robinson or Frost.' Alison's *History of Europe*, 'a work I was very fond of as a boy, would be my choice if I could take only one book to a desert island. . . . Even to-day when I am obliged to go on a long railway journey, I always take one of Alison's volumes with me. I know that I shall never finish the one, much less the nine.' He liked, too, Poe, Artemus Ward and Josh Billings. So much for what he told the inquiring Cyril Clemens, who, by the way, announced in *The Times* (Sept. 5, 1936) that he was engaged on a biography of A. E. Housman. I agree with Laurence Housman that 'a complete life' could never be written—because no one is competent to write it.

We know too that Housman read Arthur Machen² and Frederick Baron Corvo.³ To Percy Withers he described Robert Bridges's *Shorter Poems*⁴ as probably the 'most perfect single volume of English verse ever published'; and William Watson's *Wordsworth's Grave* as 'one of the precious things of English literature'⁵ (here Dr. Withers is quoting Housman's very words. Housman always spoke

Clemens' society'—but one has to know the *New Yorker* to appreciate the article at its true value.

¹ See p. 386.

² See p. 191.

³ See p. 239.

⁴ See p. 321.

⁵ In a letter to E. H. Blakeney written from Trinity on Dec. 20, 1935, Housman says more of his admiration for Watson: 'If Watson had gone on writing things like *Wordsworth's Grave* and some other things which he wrote when he was thirty, he would have been one of the first poets of the age. But he swallowed the praises of the *Spectator*, and wrote a lot which he ought to have known was quite second-rate, and when early in this century he made a fresh start, the merit of his writing, which was sometimes considerable, was that of epigram rather than of poetry.' Yes, I can speak with as much knowledge as anyone else on this point. The praise of the *Spectator*, Grant Allen's article in the *Fortnightly Review*, and the fact that the Laureateship fell vacant not much later, all helped to poor Watson's undoing.

well of Watson's work to me who in his vital years knew Watson intimately; and he took an interest in the fund raised for Watson's assistance, although he refrained from telling me whether he had himself subscribed). In the poetry of his own period there were also Christina Rossetti and Matthew Arnold; and, in prose, André Maurois and *Don Quixote* and the various schools, writers and authors of whom he gave Maurice Pollet a brief list (p. 271).

W. R. M. Lamb¹ in his 'broadcast' about Housman (*The Listener*, October 28, 1936) says:

'In private talk . . . Housman was willing enough to discuss the things that he most loved in literature and, more particularly, some favourite English poems. He regretted that Swinburne, Hardy, Bridges and others, after achieving some wonderful poetry, had written, or at any rate published, so much verse that was merely exercise of skill.'

No doubt this list could be greatly added to, added to by any one of his friends. Indeed his reading in English poetry was immense—witness his immediate finding of the lines from Pomfret and his memory of gossip about them.

For the work of two authors Housman had no liking—Maurice Hewlett and John Galsworthy²—indeed he had a definite distaste for it; and it can be gathered from his letters that for several of the poets of his later years he had little admiration. One has seen that he had little respect for the *later* George Meredith, for writing, again to his brother, on August 9, 1903, he described the novelist: 'I am a

¹ See p. 319.

² Laurence Housman says in *The Unexpected Years* (p. 203) that A.E.H. would only contribute to *The Venture* 'on condition that I did not include "two writers whom I dislike, Galsworthy and Hewlett"' and the dislike persisted, for in *A.E.H.* (p. 174), in a letter to Laurence Housman, is this sentence: 'I would rather not sign your memorial [a declaration by authors in favour of Woman Suffrage]; chiefly because I don't think that writers as a class are particularly qualified to give advice on the question; and moreover it is signed by Galsworthy and Hewlett and every one I cannot abide.'

respectable character, and do not care to be seen in the company of galvanized corpses. By this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead twenty years. . . .' (*A.E.H.*, p. 168).

Apropos Frederick the Great whom we have seen that Housman had read and read about: A.E.H.'s phrase, his very idea of making a name for himself, may have come from Frederick. I find this phrase in *Frederick the Great: The Memoirs of his Reader Henri de Catt* (1758-60):

'To make a name for oneself; it is true that there is nothing so difficult as to make a name for oneself, because we nearly always see people doing things for which they are not fitted; but even if we make this name for ourselves, this cherished object of ambitious mortals, will this name compensate for all the troubles and annoyances it was necessary to undergo in order to obtain it? In faith, we are great madmen, it must be agreed.'

Elsewhere the phrase became 'A scholar who means to build himself a monument.'

I must not forget to set down here that Housman took pleasure in the various books of Arthur Binstead ('Pitcher') and W. F. Goldberg ('Shifter')—*Pitcher in Paradise*, *Gals' Gossip*, and the rest. In fact he shared the late Lord Rosebery's admiration for them, although I never saw him reading, or heard of his reading, the *Pink 'Un* (perhaps more correctly styled the *Sporting Times*) itself. We were lunching together one day and I happened to mention them. He answered by regretting that they were no longer available. 'Not so', I replied. 'I saw copies of one or two of them being hawked and sold for a penny or two apiece from a barrow in Berwick Market a few days ago.' Then he would have it that, our luncheon at an end, we should search for the barrow. We found it and at least one of the books, *Gals' Gossip*, I believe.

XXXVIII

PARODIES

MANY writers must, with or without justification, have tried their hands on parodying the poet of *A Shropshire Lad*. Several have achieved publication. 'Evoe' in *Punch* was, I believe, one of the first, on January 24, 1923, in a series 'Shocking Travesties'. E. V. Knox begins his introductory prose paragraphs: 'The following set of verses is understood to be an exact copy of one sent recently by M. Poincaré to Mr. A. E. Housman, whose *Last Poems* the French statesman evidently admires as much as we do here.'

WHO CAN TELL?

When treaty-time was over
At Essen on the Ruhr,
The Boche remained in clover
But vowed that he was poor;
So, where our longing glances
In peace and war were laid,
There with our lances
We went to do some trade.

They may be idle measures,
Yet oh, content we are
To hunt about for treasures
In Ruhr as well as Saar,
And lift at least, while praying,
From off his bended knees
The Hun delaying
And hoof him where we please.

Good store of golden guineas
There may be or there mayn't,
But Krupps, no doubt, and Stinnes
Will both feel somewhat faint;

PARODIES

And we shall find some chances
 To make those steel-lords grunt;
 Well go advances
 When no one stands in front.

The streets were cleared at Essen;
 The Ruhr lay calm and still;
 The dogs had learnt their lesson,
 They bowed them to our will;
 A girl would call her neighbour
 And both come out to view
 The upshot sabre.
 The boys in sky-line blue.

The sabre shines and glances
 The Ruhr is ours today;
 We'll make some more advances
 And shout while still we may;
 Tomorrow—more's the trouble—
 The rosiest dreams must die;
 All life's a bubble
 A bubble I.

Let us jump over seventeen years and read a poem of the present war, the work of 'A. M. L.'—Allan M. Laing of Liverpool—in the *Manchester Guardian* of June 21, 1940:

THE BELLS OF BREDON

(With apologies to the late A. E. Housman)

In war-time now on Bredon,
 Where bells once sounded clear,
 The shires no longer ring them
 In steeples far or near
 For happy folk to hear.

If church bells ring this summer
 It will not be to pray:
 'Twill be a call to people
 To arm them for the fray
 And keep the foe away.

O, ring no bells on Bredon
And let no steeples hum
Until a happy people
To pray in church shall come:
Till then, O bells, be dumb.

In the meantime Humbert Wolfe had tried his hand.
These verses appeared in his book *Lampoons*:¹

A. E. HOUSMAN AND A FEW FRIENDS

When lads have done with labour
in Shropshire, one will cry,
'Let's go and kill a neighbour',
and t'other answers 'Aye!'

So this one kills his cousins,
and that one kills his dad;
and, as they hang by dozens
at Ludlow, lad by lad,

each of them one-and-twenty,
all of them murderers,
the hangman mutters: 'Plenty
even for Housman's verse'.

And there is Hugh Kingsmill's in *The Table of Truth*:²

What, still alive at twenty-two,
A clean, upstanding chap like you?
Sure, if your throat 'tis hard to slit,
Slit your girl's, and swing for it.

Like enough, you won't be glad,
When they come to hang you, lad:
But bacon's not the only thing
That's cured by hanging from a string.

So, when the spilt ink of the night
Spreads o'er the blotting-pad of light,
Lads whose job is still to do
Shall whet their knives, and think of you.

¹ London: Benn.

² London: Jarrold.

There exists in the British Museum and in less than five score other places (for only ninety-nine copies were printed) a very hush-hush little book, *A Shropshire Lag* by Terence Beersay, which bears no indication of the place of publication or of printer. Page 1 is its title; page 2 has

'We feel confident that these verses, springing from a keen admiration for the late A. E. Housman (who was also a parodist of great skill), will interest and amuse his many admirers.

'Terence Beersay is the pseudonym of a literary figure of some repute, who, however, insists on preserving his humble anonymity.

May, 1936.'

The contents are confined to seven parodies:

I Cheddar Gorge: 'Loveliest of cheese the cheddar now'

II Gastronomy: 'The waiter with his cat-like creep'

III Bread and Swill: 'In summer time dry bread on'

IV Evolution: 'In the night-time, in the night-time'

V Epitaph on an Army of Mermaids: 'These in the sea when
drizzle was falling'

VI Immunity: 'There was a king reigned in the west'

VII Imbibution: 'The half-drunks clamour loud, my love'

Of 'Immunity' I will quote six lines:

Terence, this is putrid stuff,

These verses are not good enough

To stand the test of merit here,

They're just as bad as Guzlow beer.

And Oh, good Lord, the rhymes you make

Will give us all the tummy ache.

In November, 1937, appeared *The Shropshire Racket*¹ by Stephen L. Robertson (a *nom de plume*), with 'pictures' by Thomas Derrick. Of the pictures one can say that, if the central figure is supposed to be a caricature of A.E.H., although deft, they are not successful. I can best show the quality of the verses by the quotation of one piece, 'In Summer-Time, the Clocks':

¹ London: Sheed and Ward.

In summer-time, on Bredon,
A cuckoo sang to me,
The clocks are all put forward;
You'll not be home to tea.
Lie still, young man, let be.

You mustn't blame your parents,
For bringing you to light!
A drop or two of rat-bane
Would end that wrong to-night.
'You're right', I said, 'you're right'.

I went and bought the rats-bane.
They labelled it with red.
Then I went back to Cambridge
And drank some port instead,
And then—I went to bed.

But when they brought my breakfast,
I thought—'Before I go
I'll eat my eggs and bacon
And write a song or so;
And, then—well—I don't know.

One evening six months later,
I wrote my final rhymes
And read my forty-second
Laudation in *The Times*.
The air was full of chimes.

I bade them bring my slippers
And light my fire again.
I took that ugly bottle
And poured it down the drain.
(I felt as right as rain!)

I said, 'I'm sick of Bredon,
And Abdon under Clee'.
A nook and book in Cambridge
Are good enough for me.

And then I rang for tea.

Mr. Robertson has a strange preoccupation in this book of his with T. W. H. Crosland, whom he brings in again and again. I believe A.E.H. never set eyes on Crosland.

Another parody which, as far as the lady who has collected it from her memory knows, has never appeared in print, is one made in Newnham towards 1910: 'people went about quoting this', Miss Anne Jones says in *Time and Tide*. 'My memory of the second stanza is probably inaccurate', she tells me, 'but this is how I think the whole thing went when it was repeated to me some thirty years ago':

They ring for early service
The bells in Fellows Lane
But I am thinking of the day
I shot my cousin Jane.

They come across the meadows
They linger at the gate
And some folk get there early
And others turn up late;

But come they late or early
It cannot ease my pain
To know I'm not the man I was
Before I murdered Jane.

Miss Jones says that she believes 'it was made by Hilda Hudson, the mathematician, who had a very pretty turn for verse'.

And Gerald Gould wrote a parody which appeared in 1904 in the magazine of University College, London, of which he was editor. By the kindness of Mrs. Ayrton Gould I am allowed to print it here—it has already been reprinted in Professor R. W. Chambers's *Man's Unconquerable Mind*.¹ The Shropshire Lad himself is supposed to speak in his character of Professor of Latin:

¹ In Professor Chambers's book appears a caricature of A.E.H., of the same period as the ballad, by R. E. M. Wheeler, one of his pupils. See p. 382.

The Ballad of the B.A. Classes

The lads in their hundreds come up—(it's a twopenny fare
 If you travel by tube, which myself I do not ever do)—
 The lads for the Inter., the lads for the Final, are there,
 And there, with the rest, are the lads who will never get
 through.

There are men from St. Pancras and Hampstead and Hammer-
 smith way,
 (This catalogue-making is easy, and fills up the space)—
 And many there are that have hopes of the Honours B.A.,
 And few that are likely to get a respectable place.

I'm glad one can know them; I'm glad there are tokens to tell
 The fellows who rot and who slack and who cut the Unseen,
 Because then one can speak them sarcastic, and cause them to
 —well,
 One can cause them to look as a rule most remarkably green.

My students may come to my lectures or not as they please;
 But I know, if they don't, the result that is safe to ensue;
 They will carry back bright to the Office the requisite fees—
 The lads who go up and come down and can never get
 through.

Professor Chambers says that there circulated at Univer-
 sity College another parody, so scurrilous that it was never
 shown to Housman. This perhaps is the parody of 'When
 I was one-and-twenty' (XIII in *A Shropshire Lad*) that Miss
 Savory wrote of in her letter to the *Birmingham Post* (see
 page 331). It began:

When I was one and twenty,
 I heard the Housman say,
 'Give nouns and verbs, and pronouns,
 In such and such a way'.

I fall into the temptation of giving the following para-
 graphs from 'A Londoner's Diary' in the *Evening Standard*
 (January 14, 1937):

'Near-Housman

Sudbury, Ontario, was offered an original quatrain of verse by Rudyard Kipling for inscription on the city's war memorial. The selection committee turned it down in favour of a quatrain by a local poet, which ran as follows:

They buckled their belts about them,
In ships they crossed the sea;
They fought and found six feet of ground,
And died for you and me.

The selectors have been criticised for preferring the work of a nonentity to that of Kipling. The criticism is not wholly just. The four lines accepted are very nearly as good as a verse by Housman, of which, in fact, they strongly remind me.

What Housman wrote (in *Last Poems*) was:

They braced their belts about them,
They crossed in ships the sea,
They sought and found six feet of ground,
And there they died for me.'

James Agate says in the *Daily Express*, December 14, 1940, that 'years ago' he wrote a Housman parody:

'The Shropshire Lad had been chosen to play for England against Australia, and the first verse set out how the village sees him off:

Red neck they wreath with roses,
Pink cheeks with kisses stain,
Brown hands they fill with posies,
And bung him in the train.'

And the other verses, Mr. Agate?

XXXIX

EULOGY

SO much has the poetry of Alfred Housman become part of our national treasure, so much has it entered into the life and speech of the English people, that we find lines, tags, quotations, fitting without effort into the spoken and written word of to-day. I do not suppose that the leader-writers of *The Times* have themselves noticed how often apt quotation for their purpose has come from his pages. The fact that it has done so is a supreme compliment. For instance, in the year 1940 there were, it is likely, many instances, but I noticed and noted that on February 8, dealing in 'Youth and the War' with the choice that the nation had so clearly made, the first leader-writer says 'there is no room here for the man who thinks of himself as

a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.'¹

And the fourth leader-writer writes, in 'Poor Yorick', of the comedian's death, of 'the garland briefer than a girl's';² while another of his brotherhood, on May 16, considering 'Early Summer', quotes the almost inevitable

'About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.'³

The Times, by the way, from another side, paid Housman's memory another and great compliment when in its obituary notice of Dr. J. D. Duff, the Latinist and Fellow and sometime tutor of Trinity, Cambridge, it referred to Housman as if he were—as he no doubt was—the great and unquestioned

¹ XII in *Last Poems*.

² 'To an Athlete Dying Young.' XIX in *A Shropshire Lad*.

³ II in *A Shropshire Lad*.

authority, a man who with a hint of approval could raise a scholar to the front rank: Dr. Duff, it said, had edited for schools the *Satires of Juvenal*, 'an edition which won Housman's praise'. Such instances of the inevitability of Housman's word in the consciousness of essayist, scholar, and reader alike occur again and again and exhibit more and more the permanence of the poems and the work with which he has dowered his countrymen. Arthur Bryant, in his weekly opening article in the *Illustrated London News* takes lines of Housman without acknowledgement, as if all the world would recognize their source, and fits them to his purpose;¹ and at least two quite commercial advertisers, for no apparent purpose save the pursuit of beauty, have decorated their proclamations with magical and arresting words of his.

And this continuing appreciation was by no means confined to Great Britain. A year after the poet's death the *New York Times* of May 1, 1937, prints a poem, 'Anniversary' by Frederick Rockwell. Here is the last stanza:

'But lads of one-and twenty—and three score years and ten—
In wind and rain they'll catch his words that never will be done.
For the furrow that he whistled down sprouts green behind his pen
Around the world from Clungunford clean back again to
Clun!'

which is certainly unexceptionable as compliment. And in the same issue of the paper is a leading article, 'Housman Again':

'It is curious too that his death was not the signal for a

¹ Mr. Garvin, in the *Observer* of Nov. 10, 1940, also did this. The fourth sentence of his weekly exhortation is: 'They stood, and earth's foundations stay.' In the same paper, on January 5, 1941, the 'Torquemada Crossword' is entitled 'A.E.H.' and is largely built up on Housman's work. Again, recently, Sir Robert Vansittart, G.C.B., in *Black Record*, quotes from the same poem as Mr. Garvin, and quotes also the second stanza of 'I to my perils' (*More Poems*, VI). There is no doubt that Housman has passed into the language!

violent reaction, the usual temporary posthumous devaluation after fame and praise. There were some efforts in this direction, but they failed. His reputation was even increased by the publication of *More Poems*. . . . By general consent he was the chief English poet when he died. He has left no successor. . . . He took the old commonplaces with which innumerable generations have tried to solace themselves a little and made them immediate, personal, passionate.'

In the *Yale Review* (Winter, 1937) Eugene Davidson, devoting himself mainly to *More Poems* but reviewing also the whole poetry, writes:

'With the exception of two groups of people representing opposite ends of the spectrum of taste, Housman has appealed to a wider public than any other lyric poet of these times. . . . He was a great poet. His range was limited, but there is not much reason for complaining that a violin has only four strings. Within that range he was very nearly perfect.

'One thing characterized him more than love of beauty, or bitterness, or stoicism—that was compassion. Compassion for the lad who thought the fair was held for him, and for the army of mercenaries who saved the sum of things for pay; for courage and cowardice; the suicide and the young men playing games they would not play for long. . . .'

Quoting then, with one misprint, the stanzas that begin 'The stinging nettle only',¹ he continues:

'Lines like these are not dependent for their effect on whether or not the reader believes in kings or even on whether there are any kings left to believe in. They cut beneath social dogma and personal enthusiasm, they deal with the plight of man as it doubtless was seen in the Dordogne caves and may still be seen in any season or in any country. And it is unlikely that the establishment of Utopia can dilute the importance of that marvellous singing.'

Mr. Davidson, by the way, rejoices that it was Alfred's brother, Laurence, who was left to decide what poems

¹ In XXXII in *More Poems*.

should be preserved among those which were left behind at his death. 'He [A.E.H.] has been, in general, well served. No one but the poet himself would be so rigorous in his decisions as to which of his verses were to be published, and we can only be grateful that Mr. Laurence Housman has not shared his [brother's] passion for leaving nothing but faultless lyrics in print.'

From over the sea in the other direction, from Egypt, in fact, comes news through the *Egyptian Gazette* of March 11, 1940, of a lecture given at Cairo to the Anglo-Egyptian Union on March 5 by R. A. Furness, Professor of English at Cairo and himself the author of *Translations from the Greek Anthology* and *Poems of Callimachus*, on 'The Life and Works of Alfred Edward Housman'. The lecture was partly reminiscence.

'Professor Furness said that he had met Housman on two occasions only. Both times Housman sat silent, his eyes fixed upon his port-glass and only once did he speak—when he contradicted flatly another man's statement regarding the characteristics of a certain kind of cherry (or was it sherry? We were far from the lecturer).'

The *Gazette* gives quite a long article to Housman. Here are sentences from it:

'Housman's poetry is enjoying—one might almost write inevitably—a revived popularity. Not that it has ever fallen from public favour . . . but war-time conditions stimulate interest in poetry, particularly such poetry as that of A. E. Housman. Thousands of men are reading all through his works now for whom, until lately, "In summertime on Bredon"¹ was the whole of their acquaintance with Housman's writings.'

But it is not only for and in the world of the literary and poetry loving that A. E. Housman was written about and is to be remembered. James Agate has twice signalled out

¹ XXI in *A Shropshire Lad*.

the poet for very popular honours. He made a List of 'My Forty Famous People' for the *Daily Express* on February 12, 1934, and in it Housman appears as number eleven (between Jack Hobbs, the cricketer, and Aldous Huxley). The reason: 'Mr. T. S. Eliot may Pound away, but I am persuaded that his brassy pentameters about india-rubber grass will be forgotten long before the world has ceased to murmur the silver jingles of the "Shropshire Lad".' And when on April 13, 1937, Mr. Agate, who, it is to be remembered, is the literary critic of the *Express*, comes to the making of 'My Private Honours List' and proceeds on the principle of including those 'who, in all styles of entertainment, have worthily pleased the million over a long period', Housman again crops up, as a cause this time, for Alex James is to have the accolade after Jack Hobbs:

'With cricket goes football, if only for the reason that one of the most English of poets, the late A. E. Housman, classed the games together as the two things which kept the soul¹ of his Shropshire Lad from "lying on the bed of earth".'

Another witness to the beauty and popularity of Housman's poems was that great authority on the taste of the public, Edgar Wallace, who wrote in *Town Topics*, June 27, 1928:

'A gloomy fellow, yet his high skies and windy grasses compensate for his graves and clay, and those beautifully handled words of his are stepping-stones so entrancing that you are over the dangerous stream so quickly that you cannot see the dead bodies lying on the bed of the river! I read "The Shropshire Lad" at a sitting—I'll read it now properly.'

I asked J. B. Booth about this, for he was with Wallace on *Town Topics*. He replied:

'I introduced "The Shropshire Lad" to Wallace. He had never read it before, and was fascinated by it. . . . There was a curious modesty about Wallace where books were concerned.

¹ XVII of *A Shropshire Lad*. Agate should have written "bones" instead of "soul".

He never made any bones about confessing entire ignorance of well-known writers, and was extraordinarily grateful if he was "put on" to something that appealed to him. Incidentally, he was a very sound judge. It was in some ways a pity that he found the sensational stuff so easy to turn out, and so lucrative.'

We can now go back to the more learned world and to the opinion of F. L. Lucas, of King's College, Cambridge, again, as expressed as long ago as October 20, 1923, in the *New Statesman* under the title 'Few, but Roses'.¹

'In a Cambridge teeming with savants who split, not the traditional hair, but the atom itself, no devout hand lays wreaths of bay on the steps of Whewell's Court. And whereas enthusiasts swarmed stealthily up the very elms of Farringford to watch a short-sighted laureate disport himself at battledore and shuttlecock, not a head turns now as down King's Parade passes the author of the *Shropshire Lad*. . . . We have learnt to take Professor Housman for granted as a poet; perhaps we have learnt the lesson a little too thoroughly. Must we wait to bury Caesar before we praise him to the full, for the earth to cover it before we realise how much has meant to us this shadow of a great rock in the weary land of modern verse, so boundless and so bare? . . . That posterity will read him, seems to me as (humanly) certain, as it is dubious if there are more than two¹ other living English poets of whom the same can be said. . . .

'Posterity, if statesmen allow us that luxury . . . wondering what the Georgians really thought and felt about existence—turning wearily from piles of little poets who busied themselves scrabbling illuminated miniatures in the margin of the book of life . . . will find here one answer to their question, one personality among so many echoing masks, one reading of life, wrong maybe, but blurred and corrupted at least with no optimistic emendations, and rendered into English of a purity that English literature has not surpassed. Some, rejecting his interpretation, will yet recognise, if they are human, that in moods, at least, they too have felt the same; and will hope, if they are wise, that though differing they enjoy him none

¹ Reprinted, with slight alterations, in *Authors Dead and Living*. (London: Chatto, 1926.) For instance, Mr. Lucas has increased the number of other then living English poets whom posterity will read to four.

the less; and some, sharing his view of life, will know that they enjoy him yet the more. And nobody will deprecate.'

Oh, but to do justice to this one of Housman's critics—and to my readers—I should print the whole essay!

J. B. Priestley deals with Housman in his *Figures in Modern Literature*:¹

'Perhaps he [Housman] would be astonished to learn [and he very likely did learn, for he lived another twelve years—G.R.] that many of us who confess to being Wordsworthians in and out of season yet recognize in this later and lesser poet of ours an artist, in the narrower sense, more tactful, delicate, and scrupulous than he, the great W. W., could ever claim to be.'

And again:

'It [Housman's] is a little estate that is exquisitely ordered. . . . A line from A. E. Housman is as unmistakable as a line from Milton, Shelley, or Wordsworth, and bears the same impress of the poet's individuality; and to me the difference between the modern poet and these three Titans, on this count of original force, is one of degree alone, for I hold him to be of the same imperishable kind.'

Of personal confessions there are a hundred. Here is one by Miss F. Tennyson Jesse, from *John o' London's Weekly*, March 17, 1939. No time spirit has moved her to a lesser enthusiasm for Housman's work:

'I . . . slid so gradually from Blake, the Lake Poets, Tennyson to the *Fairie Queene*, Chaucer, the Elizabethans and the Carolines, that I cannot remember any violent opening of my eyes to anything except fresh beauties, until the *Shropshire Lad* struck a note in me that echoes yet and always will.'

A pretty but perhaps unintended compliment was paid to Housman by the authorities who in October 1939 examined the luggage of Mrs. (or Miss) Elsie W. Dangar when she was leaving for Australia by Imperial Airways. It was war-time and she experienced

¹ London: Lanc, 1924.

'not the ordinary search for dutiable articles, but one to confiscate all books, letters, and papers. Many books strewed the floor, books specially chosen for the flight. I protested that I would be lost without them, then humbly asked if I might keep one book, which the officials could throw overboard before reaching Sydney—what about a new book on France? No—well, perhaps Noel Coward's book of short stories? However they proved adamant. . . . All were confiscated. . . . A small packet had been given to me by friends to take to their daughter. I did not know what was in it—perhaps letters or a book. When opened it proved to be a copy of "The Shropshire Lad"; this for some reason was returned to me. . . .'

So the lady writes in a letter to *The Times* of October 16, 1939. It is good to know that the Customs officials recognize a good and safe book when they see it! The story reminds me of an experience of my own when returning from France to Dover. I had brought back a case of Château d'Yquem of 1890. What was in the case? I was asked. I told the official. His face broadened to a smile: 'Let it pass at the lowest white wine scale.' I looked surprise. 'If you saw the muck that most people bring back in the belief that it's worth-while you'd understand why I'm generous to the real stuff. This wine's too sweet though, I'm told', and he made a grimace. *A Shropshire Lad* was the real stuff evidently! Certainly it was not too sweet.

Maurice Pollet was not alone in France in admiring Housman's work with enthusiasm. Louis Gillet, a member of the French Academy, wrote of it in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of May 1, 1937, exactly a year after Housman's death. Here is a passage of interest to English readers:

'On n'a pas oublié la parole rageuse de l'Empereur Guillaume II sur la "méprisable petite armée anglaise". Ce mot fut le meilleur recruteur des troupes de Kitchener. On n'a pas oublié non plus un petit poème qui parut dans le *Times* en 1916, *Épithaphe pour une armée de mercenaires*:

"Ces hommes, le jour où le ciel croula, à l'heure où les

fondements de la terre fuyaient, suivirent leur appel mercenaire, touchèrent leur solde et se firent tuer.

"Ils ont soutenu sur leurs épaules le firmament, restèrent fermes, et les fondements de la terre s'affermirent. Ce que Dieu trahissait, ceux-là l'ont défendu, et ils ont sauvé pour leur paie la somme de l'univers."

Ces deux quatrains, massifs comme deux colonnes doriques, empreints de cette gravité et de ce soupçon d'ironie, de cet *understatement* qui est le contraire de l'emphase et de la déclamation, furent aussitôt sus par cœur de toute l'Angleterre. L'Angleterre y trouvait ce qu'elle estime par-dessus tout: la force dans la retenue, le maximum d'effet dans l'absence apparente d'effet, sans éclat, sans fanfaronnade, avec l'air d'un calme défi. D'une injure se faire un titre; peser ces quatre sous de la solde d'un *private* et les mettre en balance avec les choses éternelles, équilibrer dans deux plateaux cette paie et le salut du monde, c'était une équation si juste et si définitive, c'était d'une telle plénitude, d'un tel poids, que ces quelques vers ne laissaient rien à désirer. Kipling m'en a souvent parlé comme étant les plus beaux que l'on ait écrits sur la guerre. C'était si puissamment anglais; il y avait là à la fois le comptoir et la banque, la probité, l'honneur et les métaphores bibliques, le ciel qui tombe, la terre qui se disloque, et le juste inébranlable dans le désordre de la nature. Tout cela en huit vers. . . .'

I will end with a not entirely enthusiastic, but characteristic, remark of W. Somerset Maugham's in *The Summing Up*.¹

'It is foolish to do as many do now and call a man a genius because he has written half a dozen clever plays or painted a score of good pictures. It is very well to have talent; few people have. With talent the artist will only reach the second class, but that need not disturb him for it contains the names of many whose works have uncommon merit. When you think it has produced such novels as *Le Rouge et le Noir*, such poems as *The Shropshire Lad*, such paintings as those of Watteau, there is not much to be ashamed of.'

¹ London: Heinemann, 1938, p. 79.

XL

DETRACTION

A GREAT writer dies and, after a space, his fame generally enters upon a period during which young men and maidens pay less attention to his work, criticism busies itself with attacks on his reputation and, in most cases, his sales decrease. That the sale of Alfred Housman's poetry has lessened I have no reason to suppose, but it is certain that it rather quickly suffered depreciation, and detraction. Perhaps this was natural. A generation had passed away between the publication of his first and his second volume of verse and then came silence until his death, fourteen years later. In his case depreciation, questioning, came even in his own time. Professor H. W. Garrod has a paper on Housman in his lively *The Profession of Poetry*,¹ a paper of unusual interest. But whereas Sir Walter Raleigh, then Professor of English Literature at Oxford, came out with the flat, unquestioning statement that in his opinion Housman was 'the greatest living English poet',² Professor Garrod weighs and measures, and comes, in

¹ *The Profession of Poetry and Other Lectures*. By H. W. Garrod. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1929.

² See letter from Maurice Colbourne in the *Sunday Times*, May 10, 1936. Mr. Colbourne's story is that Sir Walter Raleigh, finding one day at Oxford in 1920 that he had 'finished a certain course of weekly lectures a week too soon, intimated that he would fill in the spare hour by reading from the work of one who, in his opinion, was "the greatest living English poet"'. On whom had his choice fallen? . . . We his undergraduate listeners were agog to know. It had fallen on A. E. Housman, of course. I shall not easily forget the restrained and therefore almost unbearable emotion with which he read, and with which we heard him read, the greater part of *A Shropshire Lad*. For Sir Walter not only read the poems with that stupendous simplicity that comes only of perfect understanding . . . but it was impossible to

spite of his great admiration for much of Housman's work, to a different and, it seems to me, rather ungrateful conclusion: 'This false-pastoral twist is altogether too tiresome', he writes of the first two stanzas of 'To an Athlete Dying Young'; and then: 'I hate vulgarisms; but I hate "fakes" still more; and I do not know what to call this false pastoralism if I am not to be allowed to call it a not too clever fake'. Professor Garrod continues:

'The trouble pervades nine-tenths of the *Shropshire Lad*. The very title prepares you for a false world. I do not mean that Mr. Housman is not so far a Shropshire Lad that he has vivified and glorified large tracts of that pleasant country-side. . . . But the rest is fake: the town-and-county patriotism; the lads and chaps with their ploughshares and lost neckties; the girls with their throats cut, and their lovers who were hanged for it. I call it false pastoralism. It is not quite the pastoralism, it is true, of Mantuan or Spenser or Pope. Since those days, there has flowed under the bridges of pastoralism a good deal of Villon and water, of Verlaine and absinthe. But I do not know that it has made the pastoralism of Mr. Housman either more intelligible or less false. . . .

'I suppose we must leave poets to do things in their own way. Very likely Mr. Housman uses these veils and pretences out of some mercy to himself and others. Yet he rarely writes like a merciful man; and I am inclined to seek a different explanation; and to find it in what I have already said. Mr. Housman hates poetry, and he believes that all men hate truth. His poetry is wrung from him, as from so many poets, by some pain of life. . . .

'Too much of the *Shropshire Lad* is marred by what I will call a sham masculinity. The trick of this sham masculinity

dissociate Housman's "lads" from Sir Walter's own son who had been killed in the war but lately:

It dawns in Asia, tombstones show
And Shropshire names are read;
And the Nile spills his overflow
Beside the Severn's dead.'

(A *Shropshire Lad* I.)

Mr. Housman learned, I have always fancied, from Stevenson. The pessimism of Mr. Housman, like the optimism of Stevenson, has an exaggerated masculinity which alienates. I cannot but think, I may add, that Mr. Housman owes to Stevenson something of both the verse and the diction of his poetry. . . .

'I have lost myself—which of his contemporaries has not?—in the enigma of the man. What matters, and what will outlast curiosity, is the pure and cold art of his good work. But we are human creatures; and this enigmatic figure—one of the most notable of our time—this enigmatic figure, lonely, irresponsive, setting us so many questions and answering none of them, crediting none of us with truth or intelligence, but allowing us to make what we can of the fire and ice that contend in his nature, the Byronic and the donnish—we may be forgiven if we look at him a little like men who have forgotten good manners. It is his fault if we stare.'

And so Professor Garrod finished his lecture.¹ He admires;

¹ But, fortunately, not his interest in Housman, for in Volume xxv of *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, encouraged by what he finds in *More Poems* and *A.E.H.*, he returns to the subject in a paper which is as worth reading as it was worth writing, and which is perhaps as good an essay on Housman as has appeared. And I do not say that because he proves, on one very important matter, to be on the right side: 'Of Housman's darkest period, the early years in London, I have noted already that very little is known. It is only known certainly that, whatever unhappiness there was, there were no unhappy loves'; and 'that Alfred's heart bore no wounds of the conventional kind, that he was never in love . . . we must now, I think, take as certain'. Professor Garrod deals both with what is known of the life and with the work, hazarding in connexion with the life one or two guesses which are, perhaps, more likely to be true than not. He seems to accept the theory that it was the unexpected finish of the poet's university career that did the harm. 'It is a lame, and even ludicrous, conclusion; that a man should hide his heart—hide it all his life long—because he had broken it over a "plough in Greats". . . . He "lay down in London" . . . nursing immedicable wounds. . . . Does this seem trivial, and even ignoble? Was this all that had happened to him? At least it is all that can be verified; and if it were all that had happened in him, trivial and ignoble it would certainly seem to be.' There persists, it is true, some note of detraction in what Professor Garrod has to say, but that note has softened. He seems to allow a greater share of pure gold in the metals which the collected poems contain than he did when he prepared his lecture. And yet he is unwilling to allow that there is any advance. He takes the poem 'Eight o'clock' (XV in *Last Poems*): 'Having written that, he might well

but also he finds in Alfred Housman's first two books of poetry false pastoralism, much evidence that their author hates poetry, and a sham masculinity.

Certainly I could, were I to search carefully in my memory, discover other early considerations of Housman's work which mingled admiration with depreciation, but the example I have just given will do. It is since the poet's death that, in the natural order of things, detraction has been fairly plentiful. David Garnett's remark that *A Shropshire Lad* bored him¹ was one of the first evidences that some of the younger school of writers and critics had, so to speak, got beyond Housman, had in their own estimation found him out.

It was within a month of Housman's death that Cyril Connolly—on May 23, 1936 in the *New Statesman*—sought to reduce his reputation to what he considered fit proportions. The paper which Mr. Connolly chose as his

feel self-assured. Picking it up, whether in the deserts of Sahara or in Trinity Great Court, who would not have cried "Housman"? It is the authentic miracle. But was it worth it? He was sixty-one. Yet not one jot of advance can you ascertain, whether in technique or idea, upon the Housman of thirty-five. It is the old talent, but alas! the old napkin.' For Professor Garrod, the *annus mirabilis* is 1895. But heavens! how wrong he is when he refers to 'this long disaster of a life and temperament selfish, morbid, inhumane'. The second adjective may stand—it is possible, if doubtful—but that Housman was either selfish or inhumane I deny absolutely. Surprisingly, Professor Garrod holds that 'to Kipling *A Shropshire Lad* owed perhaps one half of its early vogue'—surprisingly at least to me, who was very much in the affair at that time. Another sentence with which I quarrel is: 'In the days when that book [*A Shropshire Lad*] had more devotees than it has now', although here I claim no special knowledge. And of course in saying that '*More Poems*, indeed, has more poetry, I think, than *Last Poems*', Professor Garrod's opinion is worth more than that of most people, but it, too, surprises me, and clashes entirely with the opinion of Professor Richmond (see p. 459) and of Stephen Spender (page 369). By the way, Professor Garrod says he would have liked to hear Housman on Rupert Brooke. Well, I cannot swear to it, but I believe that my memory is correct when I say that I asked him what he thought of Brooke and that he answered without enthusiasm.

. ¹ See p. 32 above.

vehicle may fairly be described as one of the most serious and high-brow organs of British intelligence, and its sudden two and a quarter columns came as a considerable shock to admirers of *A Shropshire Lad*. One asked, Who is this Mr. Connolly? Well, he had already published a novel, *The Rock Pool*, through the Obelisk Press of Paris, a publishing house controlled by Jack Kahane, Mr. Connolly's declared reason for choosing Paris as the birthplace of his first book being his wish to avoid the British law of libel. In *The Rock Pool* there is no mention of Mr. Housman and nothing in its atmosphere or story would lead one to suppose that its author would have seriously worried himself about either of Housman's two books. One would have been wrong. Mr. Connolly, since the *New Statesman* gave him his head, since indeed he reached the age of thirty-three, has been in the literary news. He has published a book of reminiscences¹ which has been highly praised, and he has deputized for 'Critic' in the *New Statesman*, where on January 16, 1937, he told his readers a good deal about himself with a frankness which was no doubt even franker than it appeared to be. He was at Eton, he had observed the Spanish War at first hand, and he had been to Oxford:

'The Oxford I knew was that of Oscar Wilde, divided into camps of philistine and aesthetic; politics consisted of an occasional walking tour in Albania; poetry was a sand-castle of Flecker and Housman being rapidly washed away by the rising tide of Yeats and Eliot, prose was written by Proust, Valéry, Firbank, Huxley and Norman Douglas; the painter we admired most was Poussin.'

I would like to quote the rest of the three columns of that week's 'A London Diary' but they would hardly be relevant to my subject. What I have said and just quoted has been to show that Mr. Connolly is no amateur. It is, however,

¹ *Enemies of Promise*. London: Routledge, 1938.

difficult to see why seven months earlier he should so vehemently have cast off his allegiance to a poet whom he had once admired. The obituaries of Housman, he begins by saying, 'have given us the picture of a fascinating personality, and have made real, to an unscholarly public, the labours of an unrivalled scholar. But in this respect they seem to me misleading, that they all defer to him as a fine lyric poet, the equal of Gray according to one, acclaimed as the greatest living poet by Sir Walter Raleigh, according to another.' The article is pretty closely knit and it is difficult to quote from it without taking up more space than is convenient, but here goes:

'The unanimous verdict of the Housman admirers is that he is essentially a classical poet. Master of the Latin language, he has introduced into English poetry the economy, the precision, the severity of that terse and lucid tongue. His verses are highly finished, deeply pagan; they stand outside the ordinary current of modern poetry, the inheritors, not of the romantic age, but of the poignancy and stateliness, the epigraphic quality of the poems of Catullus, Horace, and Virgil, or the flowers of the Greek Anthology. This impression is heightened by the smallness of Professor Housman's output and the years devoted to finishing and polishing, and, not least, by the stern and cryptic hints in the prefaces,¹ with their allusions to profound emotions rigidly controlled, to a creative impulse ruthlessly disciplined and checked. This theory seems to have hoodwinked all his admirers; their awe of Housman as a scholar has blinded them to his imperfections as a poet. . . . The truth is that many of Housman's poems are of a triteness of technique equalled only by the banality of the thought, others are slovenly, and a quantity are derivative—not from the classics, but from Heine, or from the popular trends—imperialism, place-nostalgia, games, beer—of the poetry of his time. The *Shropshire Lad* includes some poems that are unworthy of Kipling with others that are unworthy of Belloc, without the excuse of over-production and economic necessity which those writers could

¹ The prefaces to the Latin texts? *A Shropshire Lad* has no preface. G. R.

have urged. Horace produced, in the *Odes* and *Carmen Seculare*, a hundred and four poems; Housman, not, I think, without intention, confined himself to the same number.¹ Yet a moment's silent comparison should settle his position once and for all. To quote single lines, to measure a poet by his mistakes is sometimes unfair; in the case of a writer with such a minute output it seems justified. Here are a few from *The Shropshire Lad*, a book in which, incidentally, the word "lad" (one of the most vapid in the language) occurs sixty-seven times in sixty-three poems.'

Mr. Connolly proceeds to quote seven examples of Housman's 'mistakes', the first being:

'Because 'tis fifty years to-night
That God has saved the Queen'²

and the second:

'Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: . . .'³

These, Mr. Connolly thinks, 'suggest Kipling'. 'So much for a few of the bad poems', he continues. 'Let us now examine the good ones', and he proceeds to do so at some length. One of his examples is 'With rue my heart is laden':⁴

'This I have been told is the purest expression in English poetry of the spirit of the Greek anthology, one of the few things which might actually have been written by a Greek. Yet the first line is Pre-Raphaelite; "golden friends" could not go straight into a classical language, "lightfoot lad" is arch and insipid. The antithesis in the last two lines is obscure. Once again it is a poem in which not a pagan is talking, but someone looking back at paganism from a Christian standpoint, just as the feelings of an animal are not the same as the feelings of an animal as imagined by a human being. The other important verses are in *Last Poems*. There is the bombastic epigram on the army of mercenaries, again with its anti-God gibe, and the poem which in texture seems most Horatian of all: "The

¹ See p. 399. ² I in *A Shropshire Lad*. ³ IV: 'Reveille'. ⁴ LIV.

chestnut casts his flambeaux, and the flowers"¹ . . . does reveal Housman at his poetical best—as a first-rate rhetorician. The pity is that he should nearly always have sacrificed rhetoric in search of simplicity.'

The *New Statesman* in the following week 'for reasons of space' was only able 'to publish a small selection of a large and learned correspondence excited by Mr. Connolly's article'. The first letter (one of protest) was from F. L. Lucas. Then came Mr. Martin Cooper,² who declared that he 'understood and shared Mr. Connolly's objection to the Housman cult'. 'I believe', he wrote, 'that both Housman and T. E. Lawrence gained false reputations by the persistent silence and mystery with which they surrounded themselves.' He did not, however, explain in what manner Housman did surround himself with 'silence and mystery'. I have laboured in this book and others have laboured to show the falseness of that idea. But to return to the *New Statesman*'s correspondents: Mr. L. P. Wilkinson, from King's College, Cambridge, writes of Mr. Connolly's 'eccentric note' and John Sparrow, who has written remarkably well and perhaps even too enthusiastically of Housman's work elsewhere, says, 'Late for the funeral, Mr. Connolly at least had the satisfaction of arriving in time to spit upon the grave before the mourners had departed. His article . . . was a brilliant piece of journalistic opportunism; but, as criticism, it suffered from an evident desire on the writer's part to display his dissent from popular opinion at a time when that display would attract the maximum of attention.'

Mr. Connolly answers his critics in the following week in a letter of nearly two columns:

'I did not know that in the Sacred Wood of English Literature the poetry of Housman was a ju-ju tree, to touch which is punished with torture and death. . . . There was nothing in my

¹ IX in *Last Poems*.

² See pp. 297, 309.

article that Housman would not have said, with far greater venom, of a living adversary, and nothing in it as unbalanced as the panegyrics which preceded.'

And he goes on to quote a recent 'panegyric' of John Sparrow's: 'Housman was not merely an unrivalled Latin scholar, not merely the author of immortal verse, he was perhaps the most remarkable man among all the distinguished figures of his time.'

'If Mr. Sparrow, who admits that "Housman's reputation suffers from indiscriminating adulation" can write this, is it in such execrable taste to contradict it?'

Insisting on his comparison of Housman with Leopardi, Mr. Connolly finds an 'element of hurdy-gurdy' in the former, and 'insincerity' too, and then, complaining that Housman, 'generally writing in four-line rhyming stanzas, a metre which he often allowed to lapse into a jingle, for he had not the ear of Eliot or Yeats', Mr. Connolly goes on:

'Housman is a poet who appeals especially to adolescence, and adolescence is a period when one's reaction to a writer is often dictated by what one is looking for rather than what is there. At least read a few consecutive poems over and see if they are as good as they all seemed. I think Housman wrote a certain quantity of admirable rhetorical verse, a few beautiful lyrics and some lovely occasional lines and stanzas, but I still think there is emotionally something vulgar and shallow about him, which is reflected in the monotony of his versification and the poverty of his diction. I think he will always have a place, for his good things, in late Victorian poetry, but that he is at the moment greatly overrated.'

A thing that amuses me about the attack is that the *New Statesman* was one of the few papers to which Housman subscribed, subscribed from the first: punctually it reached his breakfast-table by post on Saturday mornings. By the way, one expects, without sufficient reason perhaps, a certain continuity in a literary journal's opinion. Compare Mr. Connolly's article with F. L. Lucas's, quoted on page 356.

Mr. Connolly has now a magazine of his own—*Horizon*. In its issue for April, 1940, Stephen Spender has an article 'The Essential Housman'. Now Mr. Stephen Spender writes so recently and is himself so much of the new generation that what he has to say is specially important to one delving into the subject. He finds that

'the posthumous poems are interesting, but on the whole they do him [their writer] a disservice, because although they contain beautiful lines, and even whole poems as good as any he wrote, they say in a cruder form, which sometimes amounts almost to parody, what he has said before, and they do the one thing which Housman must have wanted to avoid doing—heighten the reader's curiosity about the biographical background to his poetry. . . . Housman wrote some great poetry if not great poems and no criticism can lessen the value of certain lines and whole poems which have an independent rightness and certainty which is beyond comment. All criticism can do is to attempt to define the range of his poetry, and say whether the pessimistic philosophy which he advances repeatedly in poem after poem is an adequate attitude towards life. . . . Housman once compared himself with T. E. Lawrence. One of the qualities he must have shared with that other great scholar—although he did not indulge it to the same extent—is surely a shrinking from publicity with an almost violently censured tendency toward exhibitionism. . . . Both writers evidently want the mystery to remain a mystery. At the same time they cannot help throwing out hints. . . . One side of Housman censured the posthumously published poems; but the other side scored a victory in writing them at all; moreover this second Housman managed to insert numerous dark hints to puzzle generations of Wykehamists in *Last Poems*, and even in *The Shropshire Lad* itself.'

Stephen Spender concludes by finding that 'another writer with certain affinities to Housman' was Gerard Manley Hopkins. 'Comparing Hopkins and Housman', he says, 'one sees the superiority of the Catholic environment to the Protestant and Puritan.' It is not uninteresting that in

the same issue of the magazine Alfred Spender contributes 'Letter to a Nephew' in which he offers this nephew certain avuncular and traditionalist opinions on modern poetry.

Next we move to Mr. Ezra Pound whose 'Mr. Housman at Little Bethel'¹ deals with characteristic elegance with the poet and his world. He is reviewing *The Name and Nature of Poetry*. I will quote a few sentences: 'This volume reaches me with a friend's note stating that it has "upset a lot of the Cambridge critics". . . . During the twenty-five years wherein my acquaintance with letters has been anything but casual, I have barged into no single indication that Mr. Housman was aware of the world of my contemporaries.' But I have already shown that A. E. H. kept on his shelves the works of T. S. Eliot and spoke well of him, and, although I will not now cite specific instances of such awareness, I can assure Mr. Pound that he was very much aware of what was going on and did not necessarily withhold his interest. On the next page: 'Housman's note in fine print on page 8 is one of the most masterly summaries of a small section of the problems of metric that I have ever had the pleasure to come on. I doubt if anyone has done anything better in English, that is to say, listed a larger number of important—some of them possibly fundamental—issues, in so small a compass'. One turns the page and comes to 'Mr. Housman's well-known competence up to a point, and the sudden and surprising limits of his competence'. Then Mr. Pound hazards a surprising guess: 'Perhaps the suavity of Mr. Housman's writing is not co-partner with precision of thought.'

Such elegance and suavity cannot be kept up: 'On page 38 [of *The Name and Nature of Poetry*], Mr. Hous-

¹ This paper originally appeared in the *Criterion*, Jan. 1934, so here again, I see, is an example of detraction while the poet was still alive. It was reprinted in *Polite Essays*, by Ezra Pound (London: Faber, 1937).

man descends to bathos, slop, ambiguity, word-twisting, and is like to finish off the respect one had been feeling for him . . . and Mr. Housman can pack that sentimental drool in his squiffer, and turn his skill to throwing the dart in the pub next door adjacent'. There is more of the same kind of thing and as I transcribe I recall that Mr. Pound, whom I have never met, favoured me one morning with a postcard in which, apropos of something I had said in an advertisement, he roughly announced that I had never published a good book in my life! By the way Mr. Pound is himself subjected to examination by Mr. Martin Gilkes in an article, 'The Discovery of Ezra Pound', in *English*, the magazine of the English Association (Vol. ii, No. 8, 1938).

Mr. Ezra Pound may have no school but if he has I think, perhaps wrongly, of Mr. W. H. Auden as belonging to it, although Mr. Auden must be much his junior. In *Another Time*, published by Faber last year, he has four short and cryptic stanzas, 'A. E. Housman', in which he presents the poet as:

'Heart-injured in North London, he became
The leading classic of his generation.

Deliberately he chose the dry-as-dust,
Kept tears like dirty post-cards in a drawer;
Food was his public love, his private lust
Something to do with violence and the poor.'

I do not understand all the lines and, reviewing the book in the *Sunday Times*, Desmond MacCarthy describes the poem as 'unfair'. A stronger adjective is needed.

The *Daily Express* staff has three views about Alfred Housman. The member who does not like him is William Hickey, who in his column turns again and again to *A Shropshire Lad* and its author. Thus on October 27, 1936:

'What a fuss there has been about A. E. Housman's post-

humous *More Poems*. They were published yesterday. . . . Comments range from the adulatory to the acid. Poor Housman is almost too easy a debunkers' target. There is something pathetic about the crusty, vinous old don penning those neat, tearful little verses in which he is always just a "lad".

'Whatever caution may have led him to say, they are certainly as autobiographical as Shakespeare's Sonnets.'

I hope that it was a festive sub-editor and not Mr. Hickey himself who had the idea of adding to the portrait of Housman which illustrated these lines the title 'Sad Old Lad'! Then on April 30, 1937, in a paragraph on the Annual Banquet of the Shropshire Society: 'A breath of Wrekin air . . . I realized as I left that there had not been a single mention of or quotation from A. E. Housman.'

An explanation of this bent of William Hickey's comes in his column on January 31, 1940:

'An acquaintance of mine has died—Sidney [G.] Owen.

'Owen, famous classical don, was one of the lecturers whom I sat under at Oxford—a venerable, rubicund, convivial figure of whom innumerable legends were told.

'Juvenal was his subject: A. E. Housman, a Cambridge don-poet, who also specialised in Juvenal, was his *bête noire*.

'Their controversies were conducted with the utmost acrimony: the liveliest moments in Owen's lectures were those devoted to Housman's inferior scholarship.

'He would reach some disputed passage. "Professor Housman", he would snap, pricking up his ears and purpling slightly, "Professor Housman, with characteristic lack of perception, imagines . . .".

'Ironically a misprint crept into the service paper at his funeral!'

William Hickey was at the House and, having sat under S. G. Owen, he remains faithful to his mentor. I can almost forgive him his paragraphs for printing, later on, this agreeable little anecdote:

'Happening to be with an authentic Shropshire lad the other evening, I showed him the late A. E. Housman's poems.

'We skimmed through a lot of stuff about Ludlow and Wenlock and all that.

'His only comment: "It's a wonder he didn't mention Church Stretton. It's a noted spot."'

And that reminds me that when I was stopping at Church Stretton with Herbert Richards in the second decade of the century, *A Shropshire Lad* came into our talk. We differed about some line. 'It'll only cost sixpence; I'll go and buy the book and we'll see', I said. The bookseller shook his head: 'Never heard of it', he answered. It says little, that story, for Shropshire pride or for my adequacy as a publisher!

The appearance of *The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman* has given opportunities to critics of this generation to revise their opinions or to announce that they are in the wrong camp. I will quote two, the *Spectator* of January 5, 1940, first. Here Bonamy Dobrée who begins by describing *The Name and Nature of Poetry* as 'delightful, inadequate, and infuriatingly perverse' and goes on to the poetry:

'Often there is padding, clumsy inversion, "poetic" diction which dates the thing. . . . It is a pity that he padded and expanded: sometimes, by adding an otiose stanza, he spoilt a piece as clean and "diaphanous" as an epigram of Landor's; sometimes he created a sentimentality by a variation in the form, adding, perhaps, a redundant line with a tag. Indeed, it was only by being metrically as severe as a Professor of Latin should be that he avoided sentimentality. . . . Admittedly the gems are few. . . . His poems are artefacts,¹ not organic things.

Miss Ann Jones—a pseudonym adopted by a well-known woman writer—deals with the collected poems in *Time and Tide* of January 20, 1940, in the belief that they are the work of a man whose adolescent mind 'never recovered from the shock of a boy's frustrated passion and the first bewilderment of knowing that youth can die'.

¹ The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* describes an artefact as 'a product of human art and workmanship'. What else could the poems be?

'It was this single and reiterated preoccupation with mortality, this insistence that

On through night to morning
The world runs ruinward¹

clothed as it was in so newly melodious verse, that captured the fancy of the satiated 'nineties and sent *A Shropshire Lad* into those little beautifully printed, softly bound pocket editions that almost ousted FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* from popular favour and, by the following decade, almost rivalled the booksellers' success of *Poems of Passion*.² It is possibly due to this singleness of theme that after a time the poems began to wear a little thin. The first sign of a crack in the polish of their reputation came towards 1910, when people went about quoting a parody, made in Newnham:

They ring for early service
The bells in Fellows Lane
But I am thinking of the day
I shot my cousin Jane.³

... When after the war the Sitwells took it into their amusing minds to set the fluent verse of Housman into sickly contrast with the venom and elegance of Pope, it seemed as though the bubble was pricked for good.'

Then Miss Jones writes of *A Shropshire Lad*'s 'long success and its gradual eclipse':

'Only a few of the lyrics, on which the poet lavished so much instructed care, now appear as flawless as he appeared to make them all. Of these, "On Wenlock Edge" is among the sure survivors. . . . The most surprising thing, to a reviewer of work almost universally praised for the fineness of its polish, is to realize how much of it consists of skilful, laborious and often commonplace filling in of the gaps between lines of inspiration.'

Miss Jones, in referring to the Sitwells, had in mind, I take it, Miss Edith Sitwell's *Aspects of Modern Poetry* (Lon-

¹ XLIII, *More Poems*.

² I assure Miss Jones, from my own knowledge, that she exaggerates. See p. 33 here.

³ See p. 348.

don: Duckworth, 1936) although neither in that book nor in her study of Pope does Miss Sitwell compare A. E. H.'s 'fluent verse' with Pope's. But she disparages and is very interesting and downright. For instance, she declares that, with the exception of Gerard Hopkins and Yeats and perhaps Francis Thompson, 'the poets writing between 1880 and 1900 had little or nothing to recommend them. . . .'

'We have what is claimed to be the perfection of A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*. I have the greatest respect for the integrity of Professor Housman, and I am not intending any discourtesy to him when I say that to my feeling the cramped and rheumatic eight-syllable lines, the threadbare texture in which he finds, as a rule, his expression, are not suitable to his themes. Ploughboys never moved so elegantly, men about to be hanged never expressed their sentiments with such neatness; the broken-hearted groan and they whisper, but they do not confine their outpourings to the brevity of such epigrammatic quatrains as these. In short, life and death are not like that. . . . *The Shropshire Lad* is claimed to be great poetry because of the bareness of the line, the absolute lack of decoration. But to my feeling, that bareness is due as much to lack of vitality as to anything else.'

So much for detraction. So much space given to it! But the fact that there is so much of it available and that so much of it comes from hands reckoned competent, from brains estimated as capable, has caused my pen to run away with my space. I believe that it is nearly all of it wrong-headed, but it is interesting, especially when read after the passages of enthusiastic and growing praise with which *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems* were greeted. As a publisher I have always had in mind the fact that a series in which the ebb and flow, the reverses, the successes, of the great figures in our literature were chronicled from contemporary books and journals would be of more than usual interest and here, however imperfectly, the thing is done for A. E. Housman.

When bells are tolling
 And I interred
 'T would be comical
 Although absurd
 To think they'd bought her
 A funeral hat:
 My parents' daughter
 Would look like that!

3.

But no, 'tis fancy.
 That hat, that grief
 That graceful panny
 That handkerchief
 Ho! when my mortal
 Career is o'er
 She'll laugh & chortle
 And simply roar!



Yet grasp her wide
 In midnight deep,
 When beasts & fishes
 Are gone to sleep.
 May damp her spirits
 And make her see
 How many merits
 Belonged to me!

A page in facsimile from a letter of June 17, 1879, from Alfred
 Housman to his sister Katharine.

XLI

POSTSCRIPT

MY publishing for Housman never included any of his frivolous work, though during our long friendship I was quite aware that the deep well of his wit produced much humour that ran apart from his scholarship and his poetry.

Other reminiscences than mine have given instances of his lighter versification, and I only need to emphasize that though he produced his highest poetry when his mood was serious and his subject painful, his abilities should not be judged by such work alone. From early boyhood he had the art of being amusing, and his life was never so embittered that he lost the pleasure of making fun out of incidents that tickled his fancy. It was a pleasure to me to learn more of this side of his character when in 1937 I spent a day with his married sister Mrs. E. W. Symons. His past unfolded more than I expected as I dipped into her store of family history and letters. In the main body of this memoir I have used information gained from her at that time, but I have not been able to produce, there, the amusement I discovered lurking in examples I then saw of Housman's whimsical nonsense in his early days. He and this sister started a correspondence when she was a child and he a young man. Apparently he enjoyed writing in rhyme. Undoubtedly there is revelation of character in his letters and in the funny little sketches with which he sometimes illustrated them. I have permission to reproduce an illustrated page of a letter which he wrote in answer to one from her in which she had sketched a wonderful funeral hat worn in church by a lady recently bereaved of her sister. The whole six-paged letter was in rhyme. A further example appeared later in the letter which he wrote to his sister from London on the

occasion of her engagement in 1887. The reader will find it on page 4. At the time he was a clerk in the Patent Office, which helped him to put humour into the sketch.

Among other things that I saw in Mrs. Symons's house were large sheets of paper carefully drafted by A.E.H. as charts to bring together information from various members of the family for a relative who was constructing a family tree. Many hours of work must have been expended on this task which he had accepted in order to help an inquirer whom he had never seen. The last of his charts is a testimony to the extraordinary care which he took to ensure accuracy. It is reproduced at the end of this book. When the final and complete tree was sent to Housman by its compiler, he passed it on to Mrs. Symons with this admonition: 'I enclose the family tree sent me by Colonel Chippindall. I think you had better keep this, as you are the only one of us to continue the race; only remember that it is my property, and if I want it back when they make me a peer you are not to say that I gave it you nor pretend that you have lost it.'



I have remarked that the poem 'Illic Jacet'—'Oh hard is the bed that they made him'¹—appeared in the *Academy* in February, 1900. It and one or two other of Housman's poems have a melancholy personal interest, for in 1901 his younger brother Herbert—'the only one of the five brothers without studious inclinations', Mrs. Symons wrote in the Bromsgrovian *Alfred Edward Housman*²—'lost his life in a gallant charge of Mounted Infantry for the rescue of Col. Benson's guns from the Boers'. Mrs. Symons continues:

'Those who knew, could read this young brother into many

¹ See p. 36 above.

² In *Alfred Edward Housman*. Bromsgrove School: 1936, and New York: Henry Holt, 1937.

of the soldiering verses that A. E. H. wrote—though not into all. The allusions are strongest in *Last Poems*, which appeared after Herbert was killed. XVII of that book, entitled "Astronomy"—"The Wain upon the northern steep"—becomes fully intelligible only when it is understood that it was this brother who exchanged the Pole Star for Southern Cross and returned no more. No lines written by A.E.H. have more personal application than these:

"Oh I will sit me down and weep
For bones in Africa."

I imagine intention in the placing of XVIII—"The rain, it streams on stone and hillock"—next to that one. Though it has not a soldier garb, the battlefield death and burial of his brother in 1901 cannot have been out of Alfred's mind as he wrote this poem in 1902. The news received of Herbert's death told of the soldiers who fell lying all night in pouring rain before a party could be sent to bury them. They had been stripped of their outer clothing by the Boers. The poem has a pathetic suggestion that it was cast in remembrance of this burial, and of this brother. . . . XL in *More Poems* must refer to Herbert. . . . The "name and number" of our brother was—Sergeant George Herbert Housman, 6365, K.R. Rifles, 25th Battn. Mounted Infantry, S.A. Field Force.'

Elsewhere in the same essay Mrs. Symons refers to her young brother: 'Herbert long remaining a small pet brother. He was three years younger than Laurence and nearly ten younger than Alfred.'

There are a few reminiscences of Alfred Housman in Sir Edward Marsh's *A Number of People*.¹ One paragraph I may quote:

'There was a capital epigram, attributed to him [Housman] by oral tradition, which surely bears his stamp, though to my surprise I haven't found it among the Parerga which have been collected since his death. It was an address to the Muses of

¹ London, 1939.

the 'nineties, when the most talked-of poets were William Watson, John Davidson and Francis Thompson:

Ye Nine, behold amid your pastures romp
The sons of Wat, of David, and of Thomp.

He was also credited with being the second of the two Examiners who heard the "blithe new-comer" on a spring walk to Madingley:

First Don. O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?
Second Don. State the alternative preferred,
With reasons for your choice.'

★ ★ ★ ★

Sir Stephen Gaselee, Librarian and Keeper of Papers at the Foreign Office, had an article 'A Glass of Wine' in the *Evening News*, August 3, 1939, in which he discoursed learnedly and wittily on the subject of wine in general. One comes to a section entitled 'Housman's Hock':

'I trust I may be excused if I become a little reminiscent. If in post-War days I have had some of the best wine of my life with Monsieur Nicolas Titulesco, when he was Rumanian Minister in London, I remember some equally marvellous evenings in the Combination Room of the Cambridge College which I have mentioned above. We had a fair selection of the best port vintages from 1875 onwards, and they were particularly enjoyed in small parties, at which I can remember some peculiarly enjoyable sittings with three people, now all departed: Dr. A. C. Benson, who died about 14 years ago; Professor A. E. Housman, and Father P. N. Waggett, who has only recently been taken from us.

O noctes cenaque deum!

'The port, which was taken in strict moderation, seemed to loosen their tongues, and nowhere and never in my life have I listened to better talk than on such occasions as those. Housman was also a fine judge of burgundy and hock, and had a small but excellent cellar of both.'

★ ★ ★ ★

I had not myself kept the *Manchester Guardian's* tribute to Housman at his death, but I feel that some part of it should have its place in this book and as the kindness of a friend has just recovered it for me, I will quote as much as I dare. It is anonymous:

'He was . . . recognized as a voice unique for its purity and intensity by all to whom poetry was dear. . . . In 1922, however, appeared "Last Poems", breathing the same haunting desiderium, the same sweet bitterness, the same aroma of the English countryside, and all with that supple simplicity of diction and of form which expressed in itself a sort of fastidious stoicism. For the verse of Housman is so piercing and poignant in its appeal because its simplicity is the outcome of multiplied exclusions. All but the essence of his emotion has been pared away, and its expression, with its artifices of assonance and alliteration, its mingling of the choice word with the speech of every day, and its ironic, heart-breaking stabs, often at the conclusion of a stanza, is controlled with a rigid economy.

'Critics have complained of his pessimism, as they have complained of Hardy's, have deprecated a view of life which never allows them the luxury either of vague hope or of vague despair. But a poet is to be judged rather by the sincerity than by the helpfulness of his vision, and it is exactly by its unflinching personal sincerity that Housman's vision, at once so stern and pitiful, differed from those moods of luxuriant melancholy of which so much of the poetry of the nineties was the mannered expression. His philosophy is never explicit as it is so often in the work of Hardy. The critical mind in him refines and crystallizes with a relentless logic the heart-sickness of a sensibility wounded, we feel, by life to the quick, but it never itself generalizes.

'The emotion in which all his verse is rooted is too insistent to allow of that, and although his mood is always essentially the same and to this extent limited, it never grows monotonous because it is re-experienced and redefined in every lyric. The intensity, indeed, of the experience in which these poems originated may be judged by Housman's power to express it over and over again without once affecting us with a sense of formal repetition.'

The writer of the obituary notice in the *Daily Telegraph* made a curious mistake: 'His [Housman's] half-brother is Mr. Laurence Housman, the playwright.' Two mistakes indeed: Laurence Housman was and is more, much more, than a playwright.

* * * *

'Very little is known about Johnson's boots', Sir Walter Raleigh remarks in his *Six Essays on Johnson*,¹ but the same thing cannot in future be said of the boots of the author of *A Shropshire Lad*. According to the index of this book there are four references to *his* boots. Nor is that all about his footwear. Geoffrey Tillotson in 'The Publication of Housman's Comic Poems' in the sixth number of *English*, from which I have already quoted,² describes him as 'wearing carpet slippers (green, I believe, with a floral pattern). They seemed newish but of a kind which I did not know were still made.' That was in January 1935.

* * * *

It is interesting to note five of Housman's students in Classics at University College who won something of a name subsequently:

Gerald Gould graduated B.A. with First Class Honours in Classics in 1905.

R. E. M. Wheeler, now Keeper and Secretary of the London Museum, graduated B.A. with Second Class Honours in Classics in 1910 and M.A. in Classics in 1912. He was in the habit of caricaturing Housman in action as a lecturer, and one of his drawings is reproduced in Professor R. W. Chambers's *Man's Unconquerable Mind*.

G. F. Forsey, now Professor of Classics at University College, Southampton, graduated B.A. with Second Class Honours in Classics in 1910 and M.A. in Classics in 1912.

F. A. Cavenagh, now Professor of Education at King's College, London, graduated B.A. with Second Class Honours in Classics in 1904 and M.A. with distinction in Classics in 1909.

¹ Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.

² P. 319.

Ethel Mary Steuart graduated B.A. with First Class Honours in Classics in 1908. Miss Steuart is the daughter of J. A. Steuart, who wrote among other books a life of R. L. Stevenson and who among other things edited the *Publishers' Circular* at the end of the last century. She went from London to Girton, of which she was a scholar and a fellow, and to Berlin University. She was an Assistant Lecturer in Latin at University College, Cardiff, and Lecturer in Latin at the University of Edinburgh before she became Headmistress of the High School for Girls, Bootle, Liverpool, where she still is. She has published papers in learned journals, and in 1925 the Cambridge University Press published an edition by her of the *Annals of Quintus Ennius* which is dedicated 'to my honoured teacher A. E. Housman'.

I was assured that there existed only one other book dedicated to Housman—*Martial, the Twelve Books of Epigrams* translated by J. A. Pott and F. A. Wright (Routledge, no date, but actually published in 1925). That dedication runs thus:

To A. E. Housman

To whom this book as honour due?

Surely Apollo's bays belong,

In Latin and in English song,

To you.

Pott died in 1920, Wright completing the work. The dedication is presumably Wright's. He was head of the Classical Department at Birkbeck College, London, from 1913 to 1935. But there was another book: my own *The Coast of Pleasure: an Unconventional Guide to the French Riviera* (see p. 240). In that case, however, I spread the dedication over six of 'my playmates on the Riviera'. With the exception of E. S. P. Haynes and Theodore Dreiser all are dead.

★ ★ ★ ★

In my final reading of these pages I found myself pulled up, not for the first time, by Coulson Kernahan's ready

assumption—the passage is on page 301—that the ‘A.E.’ who had written to Edmund Gosse protesting that in his *Algernon Charles Swinburne* Gosse had ‘suppressed the details of Swinburne’s drunkenness and erotic peculiarities’ was A. E. Housman. To distinguish Alfred from his brother Laurence when both were being talked of, it no doubt often happened that the initials ‘A.E.’ were used in the Housman family circle, but I doubt whether Alfred was often spoken of as ‘A.E.’ simply, unless in such cases and in similar cases where a clear distinction was necessary. ‘A.E.’ was at that time and has surely continued to be George Russell,¹ and I could see no reason to assume that Gosse would have meant anyone else. Moreover I have no reason to suppose that Gosse was often the recipient of letters from Housman—nor, for the matter of that, that George Russell was interested in Swinburne and his eccentricities. So I wrote to Kernahan to find out. He was good enough to answer frankly, on October 27, 1940: ‘I thought it must be the Irish A.E. (whom I knew), but a friend of Gosse assured me that it was *your* A.E. I accept your suggestion with thanks.’ That leaves the matter open. Perhaps Russell; perhaps Housman. I should not put it past Housman to write to Gosse in that sense. The criticism was legitimate.

★ ★ ★ ★

The *Lancet* has, or had, the praiseworthy but unprofessional habit of printing every week an article under the heading ‘Grains and Scruples’ in which it gives ‘the unfettered thoughts of doctors in various occupations’. On April 16, 1938, ‘A Consulting Physician’ (Sir Walter Langdon-Brown) has his say about Sir James Barrie, Somerset Maugham, and A. E. Housman. He only met Barrie once:

‘Conversation languished, though not so completely as on

¹ Cf. *The Times* obituary notice of James Joyce on January 14, 1941.

the occasion when he [Barrie] sat next to A. E. Housman at dinner and they never exchanged a word. He told me they exchanged letters next day however. Barrie wrote:

Dear Professor Houseman,

I am sorry about last night, when I sat next to you and did not say a word. You must have thought I was a very rude man; I am really a very shy man.

Sincerely yours,

J. M. BARRIE.

Swiftly came the reply:

Dear Sir James Barrie,

I am sorry about last night, when I sat next to you and did not say a word. You must have thought I was a very rude man; I am really a very shy man.

Sincerely yours,

A. E. HOUSMAN.

P.S.—And now you've made it worse for you have spelt my name wrong.

★ ★ ★ ★

Professor G. B. A. Fletcher, to whom for his contributions to this book I was already so very much indebted, delivered himself one day in a letter to me of the following impression of Housman and I insisted on his permission to give it here, although he wrote it with no idea of publication:

'I have never felt a Housman mystery and I certainly do not believe that, whatever love-affair there may have been, he would have been very different without it. He was shy by nature and he had a passion for perfection—for perfection in scholarship, food, personal relationships and everything else. Anything imperfect was torture to him. Conversation that fell short of what he felt to be worth while he instinctively avoided. Taciturn he often was, but it was not more often than in other people the taciturnity of moroseness. He was often silent because he preferred not to speak inaccurately or shoddily. He was often solitary because any substitute for perfect intimacy seemed to him too poor a thing. Surely there are other Housmans in the world—save that they are not all poets as well.'

Fletcher knew Housman when he was at Cambridge. He himself was at King's and first set eyes on the poet on going to a course of his lectures in the Michaelmas term of 1922—the year of the publication of *Last Poems*. Fletcher was first reading those poems in the month that he first heard Housman lecture, going to later courses of lectures between 1923 and 1926. He first met Housman through finding himself sitting next to him at dinner at the Trinity High Table in the winter of 1926–7.

★ ★ ★ ★

I quoted on p. 105 from Wilfred Scawen Blunt's *My Diaries* a description of Housman's visit to Newbuildings Place. There is a further brief account of the same visit in a letter written by Blunt to Sir Sydney Cockerell on December 3, 1911:

'We all liked Housman when he was here a week ago, though anything less like a Shropshire Lad it would be impossible to conceive. Meynell and Desmond McCarthy and Miss Howsin, who are all good talkers, were able to draw him out now and then (and he even read out a poem though not one of his own), but he has a disconcerting way of refusing to smile when one says anything funny, even when he sees the joke. I suppose Dons are like that. However, as I said before, we all liked him, and I hope to see more of him.

Reading *A Shropshire Lad* again I am still enthusiastic about it, though he told me he had not been brought up in Shropshire or had any gruesome experience about hangings there or anywhere.'¹

I have written (p. 340) of Housman's regard for the work of Edna St. Vincent Millay. He also, I remember, spoke to me about it in much the same sense. Two letters which he wrote to Sir Sydney Cockerell deal with this American poet. Thus he says on January 15, 1932:

¹ This letter was first printed in *Friends of a Lifetime: Letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell* (London: Cape).

'Some things of Edna St. Vincent Millay which I have seen make me think her the best living American poet, but as she is said to be profuse and unequal I have never tackled a book of hers; so I shall be grateful for a sight of the sonnets which you approve of, though I could wish that they were not sonnets.'

The book was sent, evidently, for on January 31 he writes again, expressing his obligation for *Fatal Interview*, which he describes as 'mighty good'. I am interested in his reluctance to read sonnets. Perhaps he did not think that one can so easily judge of a poet's quality from reading sonnets alone.

★ ★ ★ ★

A friend has just shown me Michael Roberts's *The Modern Mind* (Faber, 1937). What Mr. Roberts has to say about Housman is interesting and I may quote a little:

'Housman speaks as a materialist; in his poetry at least (and apparently in his private life), he knows nothing of the reassurance of religion; but he is acutely aware of the ugliness and moral evil in the world, and he takes the extreme view of poetry as a prophylactic against the miseries of life. Escape, he says, is not possible.' And then, quoting the six lines that begin "Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink", from *A Shropshire Lad* LXII, he ends the passage with: 'Poetry on the other hand, simply by stating the evil, makes it endurable.'

Again:

'If we compare Housman's poetry with that of Vaughan and Herbert, or even Wordsworth and Tennyson, its most striking quality is the absence of anything that can be called spiritual experience. There is grief and moral experience, and a vivid awareness of the world of the outer senses, but the characteristic tone of the poems arises from a sense of loss, the absence of that strength and consolation which might come through the experience of religion. It is a pity, Housman seems to say, that all this beauty is pointless and that the world is so full of evil.'

★ ★ ★ ★

From the Bromsgrovian *Alfred Edward Housman* I may

be allowed to quote 'Farewell to A.E.H.', an extract from a letter written from Trinity College, May 1, 1936, by Housman's nephew, N. V. H. Symons, M.C., I.C.S., to his mother:

'We went up to the Nursing Home this afternoon and saw him lying in their little chapel—just a still form covered with a fine linen sheet over which was a gold and purple silk pall, and an altar behind. I uncovered his face and thought he had not changed much since I last saw him twelve years ago. As Uncle Laurence said, his expression was "Imperious Roman", and it was a fine face with the lips and cheeks still holding colour in some mysterious way as if he were still living. There was great composure and firmness of expression, and the look on the face was that of a man who had met the storms of life and faced and fought them. I cannot call it serene, it still held what I can only describe as a proud challenge—"I am captain of my soul and master of my fate; do your worst; I scorn you." Indeed, his features in death were a mirror of all he had suffered from life, and of his attitude to it—it was the face of an autocrat and an aristocrat facing a silly mob and defying it.'

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APPENDIX I

DR. PERCY WITHERS has been kind enough to give me permission to reprint here the article which he contributed to the *New Statesman*, May 9, 1936. In this permission he reminds me that it was I who introduced him to Housman—or rather that I had asked Housman to call on him when, towards the end of the Great War, he went to Cambridge to take up medical war work.

G. R.

A. E. HOUSMAN

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

THE friends who knew him best will lament the death of A. E. Housman neither for his sake, nor for the loss to poetry and scholarship, but on personal grounds alone. He had repeatedly averred his work in both spheres was finished, and he desired death. In a letter dated towards the end of 1934—one of his unusually long and communicative letters—he wrote, recounting signs of old age: 'My life is bearable, but I do not want it to continue, and I wish it had ended a year and a half ago. The great and real troubles of my early manhood did not render those days so permanently unsatisfactory as these.' No explanation was given of the period mentioned, but I remembered that it coincided with the completion of *Manilius*. And along with this wish was another, reiterated in latter years like an obsession, that death might come suddenly. Often in our talks he had referred with a sort of exultant envy to those of his acquaintance to whom the boon had been given, to one in particular who had taken his accustomed meal at high table, gone for his accustomed walk, and stayed to rest on his accustomed seat under the elms. Passers-by had remarked the sleeping figure. It was death that had come thus gently, and that to Housman was life's one perfect gift.

As to poetry, he neither wished nor intended to write more. It was not that the fount had run dry, rather a determined resolve that its flow should be suppressed. He dreaded the cost. As our intimacy grew and I became more venturesome in inquiry, he talked willingly of his creative methods and experiences. The more superficial and amusing of these figured in the famous lecture delivered in the Senate House in 1933; the private recital told a very different story. It conveyed the impression of nervous travail so intense, so prostrating, that the bare thought of a recurrence was too formidable to contemplate. The whole of the sixty-three lyrics in *A Shropshire Lad* were composed in something less than eighteen

months, the first half-dozen, he confessed, before he had ever set foot in the county. Then, as the impulse gathered force, he felt it might be well to pay Shropshire a visit—for local colour, he added scoffingly. What precisely the benefit had been he did not say; the flow continued, intermittently or tumultuously, till the end was reached. Most of the poems were composed during his afternoon walks, and set down on paper with little more than verbal corrections; when difficulty was encountered it was almost invariably with the final verse, which sometimes involved a three weeks' struggle. Such direct influences as he was conscious of were, he told me, the Old Ballads, Shakespeare's Songs, and Heine, and these he had studied intensively before a line of *A Shropshire Lad* was written. When the subject of composition was first broached he spoke only of its trials, and this primarily, I believed, to combat my appeal for more. When I persisted, he admitted to having written some half-dozen lyrics during the eighteen subsequent years; they were lying in his desk—he pointed to it—'awaiting posthumous publication', he said laughingly. My renewed importunities in and out of season seemed rather to amuse and please than to vex him, but it was only at the moment of farewell on leaving Cambridge and its war work that I had the satisfaction of hearing that my 'prayer', as he expressed it with the faintest curl of lip, had been answered, and that the number of poems in his desk had doubled since he first mentioned them. In the succeeding four years they increased to the forty-one published as *Last Poems* in 1922.

The depths and complexities of Housman's character were almost impenetrably obscured by his reticence, and still more perhaps by his determined habit of self-suppression. In the early days of friendship I could only attribute his unyielding patches of taciturnity to my own insufficiencies, and so probably made confusion worse confounded. Until one day, immediately following his visit to Mr. and Mrs. Bridges, Robert Bridges vociferated in a breath: 'Can you get him to talk? I can't.' This was appeasing, and still more so when a universally popular Head of College regaled me with the inconspicuous devices he had resorted to in the capacity of host to limit their unsupported interviews to ten minutes at a stretch. True, Housman could never be garrulous, the easy and traditional exchanges of personalities seemed impossible to him; and except good stories were passing, never jocund. But search his knowledge, suggest and question with discrimination, refuse defeat, and the reward was converse not brilliant, but rich in information, excellently clear and incisive in expression, prompt in analogy and quotation, whether in prose or verse, and, perhaps its rarest quality, judgements and opinions

that were never perverse or whimsical, but the fruits of a mind trained to precision, amazingly retentive, and exquisitely sensitive to literary values. His assessments of literary merit were always given with decision, in the case of poetry with an air of finality; almost they brought conviction when least anticipated. As instances he spoke of Shelley as maintaining the highest level of all our poets; of the original issues of Bridges' *Shorter Poems* as probably the most perfect single volume of English verse ever published; and of William Watson's *Wordsworth's Grave* as 'one of the precious things in English literature'. What was and what was not poetry he decided simply, and I should say with the nearest possible approach to infallibility, by the physical response, or none, in the throat, the spinal cord, or the pit of the stomach, and the last the supreme oracle. Once when he had used the term in conversation, he was asked, What is the solar plexus? A doctor present was hastening the Faculty's definition, when Housman whipped in with the rejoinder: 'It is what my poetry comes from.' One of his favourite books, and constantly reverted to as a model of style, was Selden's *Table Talk*; among contemporary novelists he was enthusiastic in praise of Arnold Bennett, scornful in disparagement of Galsworthy; detective stories he read as avidly as McTaggart, and readily advised those he liked.

He enlightened my ignorance at length on *Manilius*, from which I got an impression of immense labour, and of an adventure pursued less for the sake of literary worth than of resolving textual difficulties. The subject came pat for discussion as a consequence of his telling me, with an ironic laugh, that I should be amused to hear he had been hailed in Germany, on the completion of the book, as the first of living scholars. The laugh, not for the first time, nipped felicitations in the bud.

But scholars, if not scholarship, provided during one of our walks the best and most sustained talk I ever won from him. I chanced to remark that more than once in Cambridge he had been described in my hearing as their greatest scholar since Bentley. His face darkened, his whole frame grew taut, and in an angered voice he replied: 'I will not tolerate comparison with Bentley. Bentley is alone and supreme. They may compare me with Porson if they will—the comparison is not preposterous—he surpassed me in some qualities as I claim to surpass him in others'; and thereafter for a full hour he dilated on the personalities and achievements of the two eighteenth-century scholars, illustrated by copious anecdotes and incidents, relating both to the men, their characteristics, and their milieu.

Housman's knowledge could hardly have been less extensive, or his memory less retentive, than Macaulay's; to his tastes and predilections there were definite limits. He cared little for pictures, nothing for music. Since he had so often and so unaccountably allowed his verses to be set to music, and never as I knew experienced the results, it occurred to me that he might like to hear gramophone records of Vaughan Williams' settings sung by Gervase Elwes. I was oblivious of the effect until two of them had been played, and then turning in my chair I beheld a face wrought and flushed with torment, a figure tense and bolt upright as though in an extremity of controlling pain or anger, or both. To invite comment or question was too like bearding the lion in its den, so I ignored the subject and asked mildly if there was anything else he would like. A pause. There was a visible struggle for self-possession, a slow relaxation of posture, and then a naïve admission that people talked a good deal about Beethoven's Fifth Symphony: had we got a record? I turned it on, and watched. The Sphinx-like countenance suggested anything and everything but pleasure, though there was an expression of contentment during the slow movement, and faintest praise of it, and it alone, at the close.

I never saw him so much as glance at the water-colours on the walls. Once at my suggestion he went steadily and rather precipitately through cases of Japanese colour-prints; the landscapes he liked, or did he?—I am not sure; but on the same wet visit he spent most of one day voluntarily with the several volumes of Max Beer-bohm's caricatures in visible and audible enjoyment. These exhausted, I offered the recently published Yashiro's *Botticelli*. He refused, with the surprising remark that he cared nothing for Italian art earlier than Giovanni Bellini. Such an opportunity of correcting his chronology had never come before, would never come again; I smacked my lips over the temptation—and resisted it.

Of Housman's outside interests three only came within my cognizance—flowers, mediæval churches, and wine; and one or another of them filled many an ugly gap in conversation, drew him when talk had become difficult as drawing blood from a stone, and afforded astonishing instances of the exactness and particularity of his knowledge. In search of wines and their allurements, ecclesiastical architecture and its grandeurs, he had toured year by year the famous vineyards, hostelrys of repute, and the great churches of France. His reaction to the flowers of the garden was amusing, if for no other reason, as a revelation of two pronounced characteristics: strange and rabid aversions, and naked literalness in expressing them. I came to the conclusion that the flowers he loved were the flowers known

in childhood, and the more familiar in childhood the greater his wrath at the horticulturists' 'improvements'. Like Robert Bridges, he had a peculiar fondness for the scent of flowers and herbs. I have seen the former, when well past eighty, flop on to the ground a dozen times in as many minutes to smell the flowers at his feet; Housman, with more sobriety and less regard for pernicky proprietorship, would trample the border to get at any flowers that promised the desired whiff on unbending terms.

He was an avowed misogynist, uneasy and self-conscious in the company of unfamiliar women, courteous always, but strained in courtesy, and frank and emphatic in his denunciation of the sex generally. 'Where would you expect her to be?' he was once asked at table when savagely inveighing against a hostess who, after presiding at a dinner-party of men, joined them later in the drawing-room. 'In the pantry!' he snapped. Indeed no subject was more certain of rousing him to willing and decisive speech. But there is a companion picture, so different, and of his own unconscious portraying; of another Housman, and of one exception at any rate to the sweeping condemnation. We were discussing friendship, when, after a jibe at my fecundity in this kind, he told me he had numbered but three friends in his whole life, and added with a note of exultation how more comfortably he could die now that he had seen the last of them put to rest. With a tenderness of passion utterly undisguised he went on to speak of this last of his friends—a woman—recently dead. He had loved and revered her from youth; she was his senior in age, I judged, a close and constant companion in earlier days, in more recent years of separation a presence still to which he owed—though he did not quote the words—

In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart.

A stifled voice told more eloquently than the abrupt words both what he had won and what lost in her; and the story ended with a thank God he had outlived her and knew her safely laid in earth. This is the Housman, implicit in his poetry, so hidden in his person, who, on hearing of the fatal disease that had attacked the gondolier he had employed for many successive summers, rushed off to Venice in mid-winter, made all provision with legal security for the man's comfort while he lived—and life was prolonged for several years—and left for England three days later never, as he told me significantly, to go back again. The emotions may have run as deep and strong in many men, but few can have repressed them so effectually that only intimacy provided a rare and fleeting glimpse. The consequence

was, for him, loneliness; for most of those who knew him a half-knowledge—the half that tended to exclude those feelings that are the better part of friendship. He seemed neither to ask nor expect affection, but when, on the two or three occasions he either related or received in my presence unquestionable evidences of it, he described the effect as almost overwhelming. A common enough phrase, but coming from such a man as Housman a revelation of qualities hidden too deep away, and of potentialities, I cannot but think, grievously and mistakenly thwarted.

PERCY WITHERS.¹

¹ Dr. Percy Withers has written more fully in *A Buried Life: Personal Recollections of A. E. Housman* (London: Cape, 1940) which appears as this book is going through the press. By the way I was interested to notice that in the *Bookseller*, August 22, 1940, Dr. Withers's book is advertised by Mr. Cape as "published to-day" and is called *A Hidden Life*. "Hidden" and "buried" have by no means the same meaning. Housman did not "hide" his life! Nor for that matter did he "bury" it.

APPENDIX II

I AM allowed by Professor G. B. A. Fletcher and by the Editor of *Notes and Queries* to reprint (with two alterations) the following communication which appeared in that journal on October 29, 1938. Professor Fletcher is Professor of Classics at King's College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He was a pupil of A. E. Housman, at Cambridge, and bears his master in reverence and affection.¹ G. R.

A. E. HOUSMAN AND THE 'N.E.D.'

WHEN the 'N.E.D.' was completed with the issue of the supplementary volume in 1933, Housman had published a hundred and four poems in two books, amounting to some 2,200 verses. The dictionary contains more than fifty quotations from 'A Shropshire Lad', and at least three from 'Last Poems', one of which—'and winterfalls of old Are with me from the past'—is given the reference xxxii instead of xx; but the following notes will show that its use of these poems is strangely unsystematic and inadequate. References are to 'A Shropshire Lad' except where 'L.P.' is written to indicate 'Last Poems'.

I. Words and Usages not given in the 'N.E.D.'

brim up, to: L.P. xxiv, 24.

brookland: lii, 1.

cloud-led: xlii, 35.

death-note: L.P. xxix, 13.

death-struck: xli, 10.

disperse apart, to: xxxii, 6.

far-discovered: xlii, 32.

foolscap, fig.: L.P. xxxvi, 8.

light-leaved: lxiii, 14.

rainy-sounding: xxvi, 14.

record, to cut a: xix, 14.

sky-pavilioned: iv, 8.

star-defeated: xv, 6.

sunstruck, not in the sense of 'affected with sunstroke': xlii, 34.

II. Words and Usages of which the latest example given in the 'N.E.D.' is more than thirty years earlier than Housman.²

The date of the latest example is shown in brackets.

fast, to sleep: lix, 10 (1844).

¹ See p. 385.

² See also Appendix III, section VIII, of this book for old and new words in Housman.

flute, to, in sense of to whistle or sing in flute-like tones: vii, 10 (1859).

ill, in sense of difficult: xxxiii, 16 (1838).

island, to: xxviii, 2 (1850).

jangle, to, in sense of wrangle: xxv, 3 (1849).

may, to: xxix, 11, and also L.P. vii, 2 (1848).

noise, of an agreeable or melodious sound: xxi, 5 (1798).

plenty, a, following a substantive: xiii, 13 (1841).

repair, to, in sense of to betake oneself somewhere for something: x, 13 (1722).

room, in sense of leisure, time to do something: ii, 10 (1769, the only example).

stand up, to, of flame, vapour; to rise up, issue upwards: vii, 1 (c. 1330).

stir forth, to: lix, 6 (1644).

thymy, in sense of abounding in or overgrown with thyme: xlii, 2 (1860).

timbal: L.P. xxix, 11 (1813).

trustless, in sense of untrustworthy: v, 22 (1858)

umber, to: L.P. xli, 25 (1880).

upshot: L.P. xli, 30 (1847).

weald, in sense of a wooded district or an open country: xlii, 36

whiles, at: L.P. x, 5 (1802).

G. B. A. FLETCHER.

King's College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
University of Durham.

APPENDIX III

WHEN I had read the foregoing communication from Professor Fletcher to *Notes and Queries*, I sat down at once to ask him to allow me to reprint it as an appendix to this book. Little could I expect that with his ready permission would come the offer of the further results of his scholarship and erudition, material which has not appeared elsewhere. The value of these notes and the advantage from my point of view of being able to print them with my own chronicle are so great that I could not bring myself to refuse his gift. All that now follows under this heading is Professor Fletcher's work: G. R.

NOTES ON HOUSMAN'S POETRY

- I. Housman's Poems compared in length to the *Odes* of Horace and the Poems of Catullus.
- II. Undoubted and Probable Reminiscences in Housman's Poetry.
- III. Repetitions and Favourite Turns.
- IV. Poems, stanzas or even single lines pre-Housman and yet in his manner.
- V. Alliteration, &c.
- VI. Rhymes.
- VII. Compound Epithets.
- VIII. Old-fashioned and New Words and Expressions.

I

HOUSMAN'S POEMS COMPARED IN LENGTH TO THE ODES OF HORACE AND THE POEMS OF CATULLUS

ASL contains 63 poems, 1,331 lines.

LP contains 41 poems (excluding the introductory verses), 873 lines.

MP contains 48 poems (excluding the introductory verses), 701 lines.

L. Housman's Memoir contains 18 (serious) poems, 198 lines.

Total: 170 poems, 3,103 lines.

The four books of the *Odes* of Horace contain 103 poems, 3,034 lines. Of Catullus there are about 116 poems, 2,289 lines.

II

UNDOUBTED AND PROBABLE REMINISCENCES IN HOUSMAN'S POETRY

I. THE BIBLE

ASL i. 15-16: The saviours come not home to-night:
Themselves they could not save.

St. Matthew xxvii. 42, St. Mark xv. 31: He saved others; himself
he cannot save.

ASL xii. 5-8: If the heats of hate and lust
 In the house of flesh are strong,
 Let me mind the house of dust
 Where my sojourn shall be long.

Ecclesiastes xi. 8: If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all;
 yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be
 many.

ASL xlv.: which begins 'If it chance your eye offend you', refers to
 St. Matthew v. 29-30, xviii. 8-9, St. Mark ix. 43-7.

ASL li. 22: Stand, quit you like stone, be strong.

I Cor. xvi. 13: Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

ASL lxii. 52: I wrung it in a weary land.

Isaiah xxxii. 2: The shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Compare, for example, Stevenson, *Underwoods* II. viii. 26: 'a
 waefu' an' a weary land', and Christina Rossetti, *Three Nuns* iii. 24-5:
 Oh for the Shadow of the Rock
 On my heart's weary land.

ASL lxiii. 8: A dead man out of mind.

Psalms xxxi. 12: A dead man out of mind.

ASL lxiii. 9: Some seed the birds devour,

Compare St. Matthew xiii. 4, St. Mark iv. 4, St. Luke viii. 5.

LP v. 17-20: And I shall have to bate my price,
 For in the grave, they say,
 Is neither knowledge nor device
 Nor thirteen pence a day.

Ecclesiastes ix. 10: For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge,
 nor wisdom, in the grave.

LP xxix. 16: Sleep on now, and take your rest.

St. Matthew xxvi. 45, St. Mark xiv. 41: Sleep on now, and take
 your rest.

MP v. 4: And altered is the fashion of the earth.

St. Luke ix. 29: The fashion of his countenance was altered.

MP xxviii. 3-4: Thinks, and remembers how he cleansed his heart
 And washed his hands in innocence in vain.

Psalms lxxiii. 13: Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and
 washed my hands in innocency.

2. SHAKESPEARE

ASL ii. 1-2: Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,

The Tempest, v. i. 93-4:
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

ASL v. 29: Ah, life, what is it but a flower?

As You Like It, v. iii. 27:
How that life was but a flower.

ASL vi. 2: Mute and dull of cheer and pale,

Sonnet,¹ xcvi. 12-14:
And, thou away, the very birds are mute;
Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer,
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.
and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii. ii. 96:
All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer.

ASL xv. 14: With downward eye and gazes sad,

Venus and Adonis, 1106:
Whose downward eye still looketh for a grave.

ASL xxxv. 7: Dear to friends and food for powder,

King Henry IV, Part I, iv. ii. 72:
Food for powder, food for powder.

ASL xli. 16: Lady-smocks a-bleaching lay,

Love's Labour's Lost, v. ii. 889:
And lady-smocks all silver white.
v. ii. 899:
And maidens bleach their summer smocks.

ASL xliii. 30-1: Fear the heat o' the sun no more,
Nor the snowing winter wild,

Cymbeline, iv. ii. 258-9:
Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages.

¹ It may be said in passing that the conjecture 'her' for 'his' in *Sonnet*, cii. 8, which editors assign to one 'Housman', was made not by A. E. Housman but by Robert Fletcher Housman in his book *A Collection of English Sonnets* published in 1835. This Housman was a layman and the author of *The Life and Remains of the Rev. Robert Housman, A.B.*, who was his uncle and great grandfather of A.E.H., and the founder and incumbent minister of St. Anne's, Lancaster.

ASL xlii. 15-16: Dust's your wages, son of sorrow,
But men may come to worse than dust,

Cymbeline, iv. ii. 261-3:

Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

ASL li. 11-12: Still he stood and eyed me hard,
An earnest and a grave regard:

The Tempest, iii. i. 39-40:

Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard.

LP ii. 6: What golden lads are low

Cymbeline, iv. ii. 262-3:

Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

LP xxxi. 30-2: And the lovely way that led
To the slime-pit and the mire
And the everlasting fire.

Macbeth, ii. iii. 21:

The primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire.

LP xxxi. 71: Leading conquest home from far

Julius Caesar, i. i. 37:

What conquest brings he home?

LP xxxvii. 4: And took their wages and are dead.

Cymbeline, iv. ii. 261:

Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.

MP xxiii. 3-4: Whom, on the wharf of Lethe waiting,
Count you to find?

Hamlet, i. v. 32-3:

The fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf.

3. MATTHEW ARNOLD

ASL vii. 13-15: Rise man a thousand mornings
Yet down at last he lies,
And then the man is wise.

Empedocles on Etna, i. ii. 144-5:

Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.

ASL xi. 8-9: In the land to which I travel,
The far dwelling,

Lines Written by a Death-bed 29:

From the far grave, to which it goes

ASL xix. 15-16: And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Haworth Churchyard 81-5:

her ear

Is deaf. Far northward from here,
In a churchyard high mid the moors
Of Yorkshire, a little earth
Stops it for ever to praise.

Compare Bridges, *Later Poems*, ix, to Joseph Joachim (first published in June 1904), 13-14:

Remember'd when thy loving hand is still
And every ear that heard thee stopt with dust.

ASL xxiii. 14: And brushing your elbow unguessed-at and not
to be told

Shakespeare 11:

Didst walk on earth unguess'd at.

ASL xxx. 13-14: But from my grave across my brow
Plays no wind of healing now,

Lines Written by a Death-bed, 27-9:

Because on its hot brow there blows
A wind of promise and repose
From the far grave, to which it goes.

The Buried Life, 94:

An air of coolness plays upon his face.

ASL xxxi. 2: His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;

Empedocles on Etna, ii. 419-20:

All Etna heaves fiercely
Her forest-clothed frame.

ASL xli. 12: I heard the beechnut rustle down,

The Scholar Gypsy, 26-8:

And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed
showers
Of bloom.

ASL xliii. 5-8: When shall this slough of sense be cast,
 This dust of thoughts be laid at last,
 The man of flesh and soul be slain
 And the man of bone remain?

Empedocles on Etna, ii. 374-5:

Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
 Some slough of sense.

ASL lxi. 1-2: The vane on Hughley steeple
 Veers bright, a far-known sign,

Resignation, 60:

A far-seen sign.

LP ii. 11-12: 'Tis sure much finer fellows .
 Have fared much worse before.

The Last Word, 10:

Better men fared thus before thee.

LP ix. 18-19: My lad, no pair of kings our mothers bore;
 Our only portion is the estate of man:

Empedocles on Etna, i. ii. 177, 180:

We mortals are no kings . . .

No, we are strangers here: the world is from of old.

LP xxxi. 53: Sunk into himself apart

Empedocles on Etna, i. ii. 146:

Sink in thyself.

LP xl. 14-16: The changing burnish heaves;
 Or marshalled under moons of harvest
 Stand still all night the sheaves;

This may owe something to *Sohrab and Rustum*, 140:

Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.

LP xli. 16: And flute the sun to sleep.

Thyrsis, 90:

And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

MP iv. 8: The many-cannoned mount:

A Southern Night, 23:

Gibraltar's cannon'd steep.

MP xxi. 12: My aery soul.

The New Sirens, 72:

The aery soul.

Balder Dead, i. 340:

Her airy soul.

MP xxxiv. 16-17: And if so long I carry
 The lot that season marred,

Empedocles on Etna, I. ii. 262-3:

Though of ours
 No weakness spoil our lot.

Compare LP ix. 5: There's one spoilt spring to scant our mortal
 lot.

4. HEINE

LP xix. 21-2: The living are the living
 And dead the dead will stay,

Die Ilse, 17-18:

Es bleiben tot die Toten
 Und nur der Lebendige lebt.

LP xxx. 1-8: I walked alone and thinking,
 And faint the night wind blew
 And stirred on mounds at crossways
 The flower of sinner's rue.

Where the roads part they bury
 Him that his own hand slays,
 And so the weed of sorrow
 Springs at the four cross ways.

Lyrisches Intermezzo, lxii:

Am Kreuzweg wird begraben,
 Wer selber sich brachte um;
 Dort wächst eine blaue Blume,
 Die Armesünderblum'.

Am Kreuzweg stand ich und seufzte;
 Die Nacht war kalt und stumm.
 Im Mondschein bewegte sich langsam
 Die Armesünderblum'.

The close of ASL xxvii:

I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
 Never ask me whose.

recalls the ending of this poem by Heine:

Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzagen,
 Und ich glaubt', ich trüg' es nie;
 Und ich hab' es doch getragen,-
 Aber fragt mich nur nicht: wie?

5. GREEK AND LATIN AUTHORS

ASL xxiii. 9-10: I wish one could know them, I wish there were
tokens to tell

The fortunate fellows that now you can never
discern;

may have been suggested by Euripides, *Medea*, 516-19:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τί δὴ χρυσοῦ μὲν ὃς κίβδηλος ἦ
τεκμήρι' ἀνθρώποισιν ὥπασας σαφῆ,
ἀνδρῶν δ' ὅτ' ἔτι χρεὶ τὸν κακὸν διειδέναι,
οὐδεὶς χαρακτήρ ἐμπέφυκε σώματι;

or *Hippolytus*, 925-7:

φεῦ, χρῆν βροτοῖσι τῶν φίλων τεκμήριον
σαφές τι κείσθαι καὶ διάγνωσιν φρενῶν,
ὅστις τ' ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν ὃς τε μὴ φίλος.

ASL xxxvii. 2: Changing sky and shire,

Horace, *Epistles*, 1. xi. 27:

Caelum . . . mutant.

Compare Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cxiv. 15: The happy birds, that
change their sky.

LP xxiv. 17-21: All whom morning sends to roam,

Hesper loves to lead them home.

Home return who him behold,

Child to mother, sheep to fold,

Bird to nest from wandering wide:

Sappho:

"Ἐσπερε πάντα φέρων ὅσα φαίνολις ἐσκέδασ' αὔτως,
φέρεις οἶν, φέρεις αἶγα, φέρεις ἅπυ μάρτι παῖδα.¹

LP xxiv. 1-2: He is here, Urania's son,

Hymen come from Helicon;

Catullus lxi. 1-2: Collis o Heliconii

Cultor, Uraniae genus.

LP xxv. 3-6: And mute's the midland navel-stone beside the
singing fountain,

And echoes list to silence now where gods told
lies of old.

I took my question to the shrine that has not ceased
from speaking,

The heart within, that tells the truth and tells it
twice as plain;

¹ MP x and xi are suggested by the famous lines, commonly attributed to
Sappho, which begin δέδυκε μὲν ἄ σελάννα and end ἔγω δὲ μόνα κατεύδω.

Lucretius i. 736-9: Multa bene ac diuinitus inuenientes
 Ex adyto tamquam cordis responsa dedere
 Sanctius et multo certa ratione magis quam
 Pythia quae tripodi a Phoebi lauroque profatur.

Compare Matthew Arnold, *Empedocles on Etna* l. ii. 146: Sink in
 thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!

LP xxxvi. 2: Day's beamy banner

Lucretius v. 700: Radiatum insigne diei.¹

MP xviii. 3-4: And more delight to look all day
 A lover in the eyes.

Catullus li. 3-4: Qui sedens aduersus identidem te
 Spectat.

Professor B. I. Evans, *English Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century*, pp. 329-30, says of Housman: 'from Latin literature he derived a verbal economy with a frequent and enlightening use of an English rendering of a Latin phrase. So in the most momentous of his lyrics, *Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries*, he introduces a natural English equivalent for *summa rerum* in the concluding lines:

What God abandoned, these defended
 And saved the sum of things for pay.'

It is not true that Housman makes 'frequent' use of an English rendering of a Latin phrase. 'The sum of things'—a phrase used before Housman by Milton and by Tennyson—is one example. 'Changing sky' and 'day's beamy banner', quoted above, are two more. But there are hardly any others. LP xx. 8: 'prompt hand' represents the Latin *manu promptus*, 'Many-venomed' in ASL lxii. 64 suggests *πολυφάρμακος*, and 'early wise' in ASL xlv. 7 suggests *προμηθής*. Housman writes in a Latin manner in MP xliii:

I wake from dreams and turning
 My vision on the height
 I scan the beacons burning
 About the fields of night.

Each in its steadfast station
 In flaming heaven they flare;
 They sign with conflagration
 The empty moors of air.

The signal-fires of warning
 They blaze, but none regard;
 And on through night to morning
 The world runs ruinward.

¹ With ASL xlviii. 3-4 compare Lucretius iii. 972-3.

Compare also LP xxxi. 89-90:

Rolled

Ruin through his kingdom old.

When Housman in MP v. 25—a translation of Horace, *Odes*, iv. 7—writes ‘pure of stain’, that may well recall Horace, *Odes*, i. 22. 1: *integer uitae scelerisque purus*; but the construction, which is also found in Milton, *Paradise Lost*, viii. 506: ‘pure of sinful thought’, is really Greek as much as Latin. Housman uses the same construction with ‘clean’ in ASL xlv. 24; ‘clean of guilt’ and Memoir vi. 5: ‘clean of stain’. The *N.E.D.* in 1893 quotes no example of this later than Chaucer, but compare Swinburne, *Ilicet* 15: ‘there where the slayer is clean of blood’.

Since Professor Evans asserts that Housman derived a verbal economy from Latin literature, it is well to recall what Housman said in his autobiographical letter to Maurice Pollet (see p. 270): ‘no doubt I have unconsciously been influenced by the Greeks and Latins, but I was surprised when critics spoke of my poetry as “classical”. Its chief sources of which I am conscious are Shakespeare’s songs, the Scottish Border ballads, and Heine’. I see no reason to suppose that Housman’s verbal economy, if derived from anywhere but himself, is not derived from the sources of which he was conscious. L. MacNeice, *Modern Poetry*, p. 143, still maintains that Housman ‘derived his poetic manner from Heine, the Border ballads, and Latin poetry’.

In Housman’s letter to Maurice Pollet, to which reference has just been made, Housman says: ‘“Reader of the Greek Anthology” is not a good name for me.’ Yet sometimes he writes exactly in the manner of some poet of that collection, as in the last verse of ASL xlviii:

Oh why did I awake? when shall I sleep again?¹

or in MP xxvii:

To stand up straight and tread the turning mill,
To lie flat and know nothing and be still,
Are the two trades of man; and which is worse
I know not, but I know that both are ill.

or in MP xxxvi: Here dead lie we because we did not choose

To live and shame the land from which we
sprung.

Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose;

But young men think it is, and we were young.²

¹ See pp. 268 and 450.

² Mr. D. Caclamano in *Notes and Queries*, February 24, 1940, thinks that LP xxxv was inspired by *Anthologia Palatina* ix. 138.

6. MILTON

ASL ix. 25-6: So here I'll watch the night and wait
 To see the morning shine,

lv. 15-16: And the youth at morning shine
 Makes the vow he will not keep.

Paradise Lost, v. 20:

Awake, the morning shines.

vii. 108:

Dismiss thee ere the morning shine.

Compare Gray, *Sonnet on the death of Richard West*, 1:

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine.

LP ix. 22: To-morrow it will hie on far behests;

This line is probably due to a memory of the sound of *Paradise Lost*, viii. 238:

But us he sends upon his high behests.

LP xxiv. 42-4: And in silent circle round

The thoughts of friends keep watch and ward,
 Harnessed angels, hand on sword.

On the morning of Christ's Nativity, 243-4:

And all about the courtly stable

Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

Both these quotations are the concluding lines of the poems from which they are taken.

MP xii. 7-8: Eternal fate so deep has cast

Its sure foundation of despair.

Paradise Lost, vi. 869-70:

But strict Fate had cast too deep

Her dark foundations.

Compare also *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, 123:

And cast the dark foundations deep.

7. R. L. STEVENSON

ASL ii. 4: Wearing white for Eastertide.

11-12: About the woodlands I will go

To see the cherry hung with snow.

Underwoods, iv. 1-2 and 12:

It is the season now to go

About the country high and low,

.

A year ago at Eastertide.

ASL xv. 15: Stands amid the glancing showers

Underwoods, v, 'The House Beautiful', 14:

With leaping sun, with glancing rain.

ASL xlix. 7-8: Oh, 'tis jesting, dancing, drinking

Spins the heavy world around.

Underwoods, xxiii, 'Our Lady of the Snows', 69-70:

And still with laughter, song and shout,

Spin the great wheel of earth about.

LP xxxiv. 6: The plume of smoke.

It may be that this comes from Stevenson's *Edinburgh* (London, 1879), p. 6, 'the long plume of smoke over the plain'. Housman's interest in Stevenson's prose is shown by his emendation of a letter of Stevenson to Henry James dated 17 June 1893; see the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* of 1921, p. 17.

8. ANDREW LANG

ASL i. 17-20: It dawns in Asia, tombstones show

And Shropshire names are read;

And the Nile spills his overflow

Beside the Severn's dead.

Valentine in Form of Ballade, 17-20:

Where sands of Egypt, swart and red,

'Neath suns Egyptian glow,

In places of the princely dead,

By the Nile's overflow.

Compare also *The Cloud Chorus*, 4:

Or whether your golden urns are dipped in Nile's
overflow

ASL xx. 13: But in the golden-sanded brooks

They Hear the Sirens for the Second Time, 17:

Beside a golden sanded bay.

ASL xlv. 7: And early wise and brave in season.

Love's Miracle, 6:

Makes her with dull experience early wise.

LP xiv. 21-2: For so the game is ended

That should not have begun.

The Shade of Helen, 33-5:

Ah, would the game were ended, and the light,
The blinding light, and all too mighty suns,
Withdrawn, and I once more with sister shades.

The reader may be reminded that Housman quotes the octave of Lang's sonnet on the *Odyssey* in *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, p. 22.

9. TENNYSON

ASL xix. 8: Townsman of a stiller town.

LP vii. 20: To the still dwelling.

Maud, II. v. vii. 6:

Another stiller world of the dead

LP xxxi. 4: And along the utmost rim

The Day-Dream, 'The Departure', i. 5-6:

Across the hills, and far away

Beyond their utmost purple rim.

iv. 5-6:

And o'er the hills, and far away

Beyond their utmost purple rim.

MP ii. 30-2: And nerve and heart and brain

Are ashes for the air to lift

And lightly shower again.

The Vision of Sin, iv. 105-8:

Fill the can, and fill the cup:

All the windy ways of men

Are but dust that rises up,

And is lightly laid again.

Memoir vi. 4 and 8: Ask me no more

The Princess, vi, concluding lyric has these words as a refrain.

10. POPE

ASL xxxi. 13-14: There, like the wind through woods in riot,

Through him the gale of life blew high;

Essay on Man, ii. 108:

Reason the card, but passion is the gale.

Compare a passage in a letter from Lord Bolingbroke to Swift, dated 29 March 1731 and given in *The Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. ii, London, 1841, p. 646: 'Passions (says Pope, our divine, as you will see one time or other) are the gales of life; let us not complain that they do not blow a storm.'

LP xxxi. 86: But the traitor musket spoke.

Odyssey, xxii. 93:

He drew his traitor-sword.

- MP iii. 19: The pale, the perished nation
 xx. 7: The put-to-death, the perished nation
Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, 52:
 To the pale nations of the dead.

II. GOLDSMITH

- ASL xviii. 3-4: And miles around the wonder grew
 How well did I behave.
The Deserted Village, 215-16:
 And still they gaz'd, and still the wonder grew,
 That one small head could carry all he knew.
 MP iii. 17: They cease from long vexation,
The Deserted Village, 95:
 My long vexations pass'd.

12. SCOTT

- ASL vii. 4-5: Against the morning beam
 I strode beside my team,
 (ASL xliii. 1: When I meet the morning beam,)
The Betrothed, song in chapter xix, verses 11-12:
 Arm and up—the morning beam
 Hath call'd the rustic to his team.

This song by Scott should be compared with ASL iv, and with LP viii should be compared his song in *The Lady of the Lake*, I. xxxi.

13. GEORGE WITHER

- ASL xxi, of which the first stanza begins:
 In summertime on Bredon
 and the second: Here of a Sunday morning
 My love and I would lie,
 seems to have been written with some memory of George Wither's
A Love Sonnet, the third stanza of which begins:
 In summer time to Medley
 My love and I would go.

14. BLAKE

- ASL lv. 14: Day looks down the eastern steep,
 This is probably written with a memory of Blake, *Mad Song*, 5-6:
 But lo! the morning peeps
 Over the eastern steeps.
 The N.E.D. quotes Carlyle, *French Revolution*, I. 2. 1: 'behold the
 new morning glittering down the eastern steeps.'

15. STERNE

- LP xiv. 1: The night my father got me
 His mind was not on me;
 recalls the beginning of *Tristram Shandy*, 'I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me.'

16. W. H. DAVIES

- LP xl. 9: The cuckoo shouts all day at nothing
 The Woods and Banks, 7: Hear how the cuckoo shouts all day.

III

REPETITIONS AND FAVOURITE TURNS IN HOUSMAN'S POETRY

- ASL xxxvii. 1: As through the *wild green* hills of Wyre
 LP xxxii. 2: The *wild green* woods among,
 ASL xxxvii. 30: *Standing hill*,
 xli. 5: *Standing hills*,
 Contrast MP xxi. 6: Founded hills.
 LP xxxi. 2: Through the sad *uncoloured* plain
 MP xlvi. 9-10: There, as warm the west was burning
 And the east *uncoloured* cold,
 ASL li. 16: Of men whose thoughts *are not as* mine.
 LP xii. 5: And if my ways *are not as* theirs
 ASL xli. 3: The earth, because my *heart* was sore,
 LP xxxv. 11: The *heart* of man has long been sore
 ASL x. 14: *And sure enough* the palms are there,
 xxvi. 11: *And sure enough* beneath the tree
 ASL lv. 3-4: Still, I think, in newer veins
 Frets the changeless blood of man.
 MP xxv. 1: Yon fire that *frets* the eastern sky
 xxxiii. 13: And here *fret* we and moulder
 ASL viii. 11: At *rising* day,
 xliv. 13: The *rising* morrow
 ASL xxxv. 1: On the *idle hill* of summer,
 LP xxxviii. 4: And all about the *idle hill*
 LP xxxi. 23-4: Measuring the *listless plain*,
 I began to think again.

- MP xxviii. 2-3: Among the bluebells of the *listless plain*,
Thinks,
- ASL i. 13: To skies that *knit* their heartstrings right,
xxxii. 3-4: The stuff of life to *knit* me
Blew hither:
- ASL lv. 9: There, when *hueless* is the west
lxiii. 4: The *hue* was not the wear.
- LP xix. 19: *Hues* in the east assemble
xxxix. 12: The *hues* of evening died;
MP xlv. 19: Outward in the ebb of *hues*
- ASL xxxvii. 36: A grasp to *friend* me to the grave.
xlv. 3: 'Twill hurt, but here are salves to *friend* you,
lxii. 57: And I will *friend* you, if I may,
MP v. 24: No, nor thy righteousness, shall *friend* thee more.
- ASL xxvi. 15: And I *spell* nothing in their stir,
MP xxxix. 6: And *spelt* the lesson plain;
- ASL li. 11: Still he stood and *eyed* me hard,
LP i. 11: As the edge of heaven he *eyes*,
i. 35-6: To flush the fading tinges *eyed*
By other lads at eventide.
vi. 22: And *eyeing* my comrades
- ASL iv. 15-16: Never lad that *trod* on leather
Lived to feast his heart with all.
ix. 23-4: Heels that held up as straight a chap
As *treads* upon the land.
- ASL iv. 16: Lived to *feast his heart* with all.
MP v. 19: *Feast* then *thy heart*,
- LP xvi. 6: Winter *past* and winter's pains,
xxiv. 27: Folly spurned and danger *past*,
xxix. 7: Marching, fighting, victory *past*,
- LP xiii. 31-2: They scour about the world *a-wooing*
The bullet to their breast.
- Memoir xiii. 6-7: Oh waste no words *a-wooing*
The soft sleep to your bed;
- ASL i. 13: To skies that knit their heartstrings *right*,
MP iv. 1: O youth whose heart is *right*,

- LP xxxvi. 1: *West and away* the wheels of darkness roll,
 MP xiv. 3: *West and away* from here to heaven
 ASL lv. 7-8: They, no help, for all they try,
 Tread the mill I trod before.
 MP xxvii. 1: To stand up straight and *tread the turning mill*,
 LP xiii. 29: Their love is for their own *undoing*,
 MP xxxv. 7-8: He to the hill of his *undoing*
 Pursued his road.
 LP xxxvii. 2: The hour when *earth's foundations fled*,
 6: They stood, and *earth's foundations* stay;
 MP xxvi. 7: And *earth's foundations* will depart
 xlvi. 4: While *earth's foundations* stand
 7: When *earth's foundations* flee,
 Memoir xiv. 3: The *fleeing* of *earth's foundations*.
 ASL vi. 9-12: Buy them, buy them: eve and *morn*
 Lovers' ills are all to sell.
 Then you can lie down *forlorn*;
 But the lover will be well.
 ix. 9-12: They hang us now in Shrewsbury jail:
 The whistles blow *forlorn*,
 And trains all night groan on the rail
 To men that die at *morn*.
 LP i. 33-4: Too fast to yonder strand *forlorn*
 We journey, to the sunken bourn,
 xix. 17-20: The night goes out and under
 With all its train *forlorn*;
 Hues in the east assemble
 And cocks crow up the *morn*.
 ASL xxviii. 18: That began the *ancient* wrong;
 Memoir xii. 6: Whole of an *ancient* evil,
 ASL xxxvii. 24: When I forget you, *hearts of gold*;
 MP xlii. 15: That *heart of gold*,
 ASL v. 10: 'Tis now the blood *runs gold*,
 xlii. 4: And all the brooks *ran gold*.
 ASL i. 2: The shires have seen it *plain*,
 xxvi. 17: And *plain* for her to understand
 xxxviii. 13: Oh lads, at home I heard you *plain*,
 xl. 6: I see it shining *plain*,

- LP xxv. 6: The heart within, that tells the truth and tells it
twice as *plain*;
MP iv. 4: Where Virtue beckons *plain*;
xxxix. 6: And spelt the lesson *plain*;
Memoir i. 16: Lydians, see you Atys *plain*?

Housman is fond of the 'j' sound:

- ASL xv. 16: A *jonquil*, not a Grecian lad.
xxv. 3: We needs must *jangle* (archaic for 'wrangle').
xxvii. 3: And hear the harness *jingle*
xlix. 7: Oh, 'tis *jesting*, dancing, drinking
LP xxiv. 25: *Jostling* markets.
Memoir ix. 1: When the bells *justle* in the tower
xiv. 1: Oh is it the *jar* of nations,
ASL x. 15-16: And each will find by hedge or *pond*
Her waving silver-tufted *wand*.
xlii. 57-60: With lips that brim with laughter
But never once *respond*,
And feet that fly on feathers,
And serpent-circled *wand*.
ASL xiii. 14: And sold for endless *rue*.
liv. 1: With *rue* my heart is laden
ASL iv. 18: Sunlit *pallets*
xi. 1: Midnight *pallet*
ASL xxviii. 20: That wept of old the *endless* ill.
xxxii. 12: I take my *endless* way.
xliii. 18: Slow the *endless* night comes on,
li. 15: I too survey that *endless* line
lx. 7: In all the *endless* road you tread
Contrast xxxvi. 8: 'pursue the *ceaseless* way' and LP xxxiv. 29:
'the *sumless* tale of sorrow'. 'Endless' does not occur in LP.
ASL xlvii. 15: Stop to *shake their fists* and curse;
Memoir xviii. 2: They groan and *shake their fists*.
MP xxi. 7-8: Though I to *earth and darkness*
Return in blood and pain.
xlvii. 9-10: We now to peace and *darkness*
And *earth* and thee restore

- MP xv. 9: Beneath him, in the *nighted* firth,
 xxiii. 1: Crossing alone the *nighted* ferry
 ASL xli. 26: In many an eye that *measures* me
 LP xxxi. 23: *Measuring* the listless plain,
 MP xxvii. 3: The two *trades* of man;
 xxxix. 5: I too was taught the *trade* of man
 MP iii. 14: Their statutes *none* regard:
 xliii. 9-10: The signal fires of warning
 They blaze, but *none* regard;
 LP ii. 5: The round world *over*,
 xli. 31: And England *over*
 ASL l. 18: This luggage I'd *lief* set down?
 LP iv. 11: But *lief* will he lose them
 x. 3-4: *Lief* should I rouse at morning
 And *lief* lie down of nights.
 ASL liii. 5-6: I shall not vex you with my face
 Henceforth, my love, *for aye*;
 lix. 10: And sleep you fast *for aye*;
 LP viii. 16: At the inn of night *for aye*.
 MP iv. 26: Thou wast not born *for aye*. (quoted in v. 8).
 viii. 8: That I shall be *for aye*.
 xlii. 8 and 20: The news must keep *for aye*.
 xlv. 20: When I depart *for aye*?
 Memoir xi. 20: A little dust has quenched *for aye*;
 LP xvii. 9-10: And now he does not even see
 Signs of the *nadir* roll
 xxxvi. 11-12: The subterranean dark
 Has crossed the *nadir*, and begins to climb.
 MP iii. 3: The nations of the *nadir*
 ASL ix. 3: And *yon* the gallows used to clank
 xxxii. 2: And *yon* twelve-winded sky,
 xl. 2: From *yon* far country blows:
 LP i. 25: Oh lad, I fear that *yon's* the sea
 MP xxv. 1: *Yon* fire that frets the eastern sky
 Memoir i. 28: Lydians, Lydians, what is *yon*?

- ASL xix. 21-2: So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the *sill* of shade,
LP xxxi. 50: The insuperable *sill*,
Memoir xi. 3-4: And the foot of twilight still
Is stolen toward the western *sill*.
- ASL xix. 8: Townsman of a *stiller* town.
LP vii. 20: To the *still* dwelling.
- ASL xlii. 3: The *world-wide* air was azure
MP xxxviii. 6: For *world-wide* labourers worn;
Compare LP xxix. 1: Wake not for the *world-heard* thunder
Memoir xv. 19: Bears up so light that *world-seen* span.
- ASL lv. 14: Day looks down the eastern *steep*,
LP xvii. 1: The Wain upon the northern *steep*
xxiv. 13: And the star from Ceta's *steep*
xli. 14: From tree and tower and *steep*.
- ASL xli. 20: The seasons *range* the country roads,
xlii. 2: I *ranged* the thymy wold;
LP xviii. 19: And *range* the lovely lands of earth
- ASL xxvii. 29: Yes, lad, I *lie easy*,
lix. 9: *Lie* you *easy*, dream you light,
- ASL iii. 17: And you will *list* the bugle
LP xxv. 4: And echoes *list* to silence now where gods told lies
of old.
- ASL lxiii. 9-10: Some seed the birds devour,
And some the *season mars*,
MP v. 13. But oh, whate'er the sky-led *seasons mar*,
xxxiv. 16-17:
And if so long I carry
The lot that *season marred*,
- ASL xxvi. 13-14: And overhead the aspen *heaves*
Its rainy-sounding silver *leaves*;
xxxi. 2-4: His forest fleece the Wrekin *heaves*;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn snow the *leaves*.

- LP xl. 13-18: On acres of the seeded grasses
 The changing burnish *heaves*;
 Or marshalled under moons of harvest
 Stand still all night the *sheaves*;
 Or beeches strip in storms for winter
 And stain the wind with *leaves*.
- xxvii. 1-2: The sigh that *heaves* the grasses
 Whence thou wilt never rise
- ASL xxxi. 9-10: Then, 'twas before my time, the Roman
 At yonder *heaving* hill would stare:
- ASL xii. 9: In the *nation that is not*
- MP ii. 28: The *nation that is not*,
- iii. 19-20: The pale, the *perished nation*
 That never see the sun;
- xiv. 11-12: There I was friends with *perished* people,
 And there lie they.
- xx. 7-8: The put-to-death, the *perished nation*
 How sound they sleep!
- ASL vii. 3: And *blithe afield* to ploughing
- x. 13: *Afield* for palms the girls repair,
- xlii. 33-4: By blowing realms of woodland
 With sunstruck vanes *afield*
- MP xviii. 8: 'Tis *blithe* to see the sunshine fail,
- Memoir xi. 5-6: *Blithe* the maids to milking, *blithe*
 Men in hayfields stone the scythe;
- ASL iv. 1-2: Wake: the silver dusk returning
 Up the beach of darkness *brims*,
- xlii. 57: With lips that *brim* with laughter
- LP xxiv. 23-4: The golden cup
 Given and guarded, *brimming* up,
- MP xli. 10: And come to the sea's *brim*,
- ASL iv. 3-4: And the ship of sunrise burning
 Strands upon the eastern *rim*s.
- LP xxxi. 4: And along the utmost *rim*
- Memoir xi. 19-20:
 The thirst that rivers could not *lay*
 A little dust has quenched for *aye*;

xiii. 3-4:

The drought and thirst and parching
A little dust will *lay*,

ASL xlviii. 9: Now, and I *muse* for why and never find the
reason,

LP xiv. 4: To *muse* if I should be
The son you see.

xxxii. 1: When I would *muse* in boyhood

xxxix. 3: I *muse* on change and fortune

ASL xlii. 12: He *looked* me in the eyes.

MP xviii. 3-4: And more delight to *look* all day
A lover in the eyes.

ASL iv. 11: Hark, the empty *highways* crying

xiv. 17: Here by the labouring *highway*

xl. 7: The happy *highways* where I went

LP xviii. 11: Over the hill the *highway* marches

xl. 21-2: Where over elmy plains the *highway*
Would mount the hills and shine,

MP xxxiv. 3: And breasts the hillside *highway*

ASL xvii. 7: See the *son* of grief at cricket

xliv. 15: Dust's your wages, *son* of sorrow,

LP i. 9: The *son* of woman turns his brow

MP i. 6: Sleep well and see no morning, *son* of man.

ASL xliii. 17-19: 'Tis long till eve and morn are *gone*:

Slow the endless night *comes on*,

And late to fulness grows the birth

lxiii. 13-16: And fields will yearly bear them

As light-leaved spring *comes on*,

And luckless lads will wear them

When I am dead and *gone*.

MP xvii. 3-4: Soon will evening's self be *gone*
And the whispering night *come on*.

Memoir i. 26: And the wildering night *comes on*;

ASL xiii. 11-12: The *heart out of the bosom*
Was never given in vain;

xiv. 15-16: That's lost for everlasting
The *heart out of his breast*.

LP i. 2: 'Twill have the *heart out of your breast*;

- LP iv. 5: To sleep when *the bugle is crying*
 xiii. 9: Hark, I heard *the bugle crying*,
 ASL xx. 14: *Azure* meres
 xli. 18: The bluebells in the *azured* wood.
 xlii. 3: The world-wide air was *azure*
 Memoir xi. 2: *Azuring* the air,
 ASL ix. 26: To see the *morning shine*,
 lv. 15: And the youth at *morning shine*
 ASL iii. 15: The lads you leave will *mind* you
 iii. 27: Oh, town and field will *mind* you
 xii. 7: Let me *mind* the house of dust
 xxxvii. 25: The land where I shall *mind* you not
 LP xxiv. 30: Is stolen abroad the *wildering night*,
 Memoir i. 26: And the *wildering night* comes on;
 ASL xliv. 25: *Turn safe to rest*, no dreams, no waking;
 lii. 12: And *turn to rest* alone.
 LP xxxiii. 9: Sleep, be still, *turn to your rest*
 ASL xliv. 7: And early wise and brave *in season*
 LP xiii. 21: They mow the field of man *in season*:
 MP xxii. 7: And pull the flower *in season*
 MP xx. 5: With every pulse *in station*,
 xliii. 5: Each *in* its steadfast *station*
 ASL iii. 18 and 22:
 Lands of morn
 LP xxv. 13: *Lands of morning*;
 Housman uses the word 'morn' thirteen times and the word 'morning' twenty-eight times. He is fond of using 'morning' attributively:
 ASL vii. 4: Against the morning beam
 ix. 18: The morning clocks will ring
 xliii. 1: When I meet the morning beam,
 lv. 15: And the youth at morning shine
 lxii. 37: Then I saw the morning sky:
 LP xv. 2: Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.
 xvi. 4: Flowers among the morning dews.

IV

POEMS, STANZAS, OR EVEN SINGLE LINES PRE-HOUSMAN
AND YET IN HIS MANNER

Readers of English poetry come from time to time upon poems, stanzas, or even single lines which were written before any of Housman's poems and yet are in his manner. A few examples from my collection are given here.

Long-expected one and twenty,
Ling'ring year, at last is flown;
Pomp and Pleasure, Pride and Plenty,
Great Sir John, are all your own.

Loosen'd from the Minor's tether,
Free to mortgage or to sell,
Wild as wind, and light as feather,
Bid the Slaves of thrift farewell.

Call the Bettrys, Kates, and Jennys,
Ev'ry name that laughs at Care,
Lavish of your Grandsire's guineas,
Show the Spirit of an heir.

All that prey on vice and folly
Joy to see their quarry fly,
Here the Gamester light and jolly,
There the Lender grave and sly.

Wealth, Sir John, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will:
See the Jockey, see the Pander,
Bid them come, and take their fill.

When the bonny Blade carouses,
Pockets full and Spirits high,
What are acres? what are houses?
Only dirt, or wet or dry.

If the Guardian or the Mother
Tell the woes of wilful waste,
Scorn their counsel and their pother,
You can hang or drown at last.

Samuel Johnson, *A Short Song of Congratulation*.

The last line of another poem by Dr. Johnson may be noticed:

Hermit hoar, in solemn cell
Wearing out life's evening grey,
Strike thy bosom, sage, and tell
What is bliss, and which the way.

Thus I spoke, and speaking sigh'd,
Scarce repress'd the starting tear,
When the hoary sage reply'd,
Come, my lad, and drink some beer.

Compare especially the last line of LP ix: Shoulder the sky, my lad, and drink your ale.

Much of Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* might be quoted; these lines are akin to ASL xl:

11-14: Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,
Ah fields belov'd in vain,
Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
A stranger yet to pain!

His *Ode on the Pleasure Arising from Vicissitude* has points of contact with LP xvi. By the side of Housman's fourth stanza:

Now the scorned unlucky lad
Rousing from his pillow gnawn
Mans his heart and deep and glad
Drinks the valiant air of dawn.

may be set Gray's lines:

See the Wretch, that long has tost
On the thorny bed of Pain,
At length repair his vigour lost,
And breathe and walk again.

About the fields I wander, knowing this
Only, that what I seek I cannot find;

Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, i. 765-6.

For want of me the world's course will not fail:

C. Patmore, *Magna est Veritas* 7.

The third stanza of Richard Corbet's *A Proper New Ballad, intituled The Fairies Farewell; or, God-a-Mercy Will*:

At morning and at evening both
You merry were and glad,
So little care of sleepe and sloth
These prettie Ladies had;

When *Tom* came home from labour,
 Or *Cisse* to milking rose,
 Then merrily merrily went their Tabor,
 And nimbly went their Toes.

at once brings to mind the final poem in *Last Poems* which begins
 'When lads were home from labour'.

Housman was an admirer of Matthew Arnold's poetry, and there is much in Arnold's work which suggests Housman. No poem suggests him so strongly as *The Last Word*, which his brother on p. 68 of his memoir mentions as one of Housman's favourites:

Creep into thy narrow bed,
 Creep, and let no more be said!
 Vain thy onset! all stands fast;
 Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease!
 Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
 Let them have it how they will!
 Thou art tired; best be still!

They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee.
 Better men fared thus before thee;
 Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
 Hotly charged—and broke at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
 Let the victors, when they come,
 When the forts of folly fall,
 Find thy body by the wall.

An affinity with Housman is plain in *Destiny*:

Why each is striving, from of old,
 To love more deeply than he can?
 Still would be true, yet still grows cold?
 —Ask of the Powers that sport with man!

They yok'd in him, for endless strife,
 A heart of ice, a soul of fire;
 And hurl'd him on the Field of Life,
 An aimless unallay'd Desire.

Housman's poetry contains four or five reminiscences of *Empedocles on Etna*, and many lines could be quoted from that poem which are like him. I give two examples from the passage which, for

Housman as early as his Oxford days, 'contained all the law and the prophets':

I. ii. 142-51: Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears!
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that
shrine!

What makes thee struggle and rave?
Why are men ill at ease?—
'Tis that the lot they have
Fails their own will to please;
For man would make no murmuring, were his
will obey'd.

202-11: Born into life—who lists
May what is false hold dear,
And for himself make mists
Through which to see less clear;
The world is what it is, for all our dust and din.

Born into life—'tis we,
And not the world, are new.
Our cry for this, our plea,
Others have urged it too;
Our wants have all been felt, our errors made
before.

I add three quotations from other poems:

Lines Written by a Death-Bed, 33-4:

For daylight, for the cheerful sun,
For feeling nerves and living breath.

Saint Brandan, 64:

And friends me in the pit of fire.

Housman uses the verb 'to friend' four times.

Longing, 1-4:

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again.
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Compare ASL vi, last line: But the lover will be well.

By the side of MP iv, *The Sage to the Young Man*, which begins:

O youth whose heart is right,
Whose loins are girt to gain
The hell-defended height
Where Virtue beckons plain; .

may be set Bridges, *Shorter Poems*, iii. 19:

O youth whose hope is high,
Who dost to Truth aspire,
Whether thou live or die,
O look not back nor tire.

Thou that art bold to fly
Through tempest, flood and fire,
Nor dost shrink to try
Thy heart in torments dire:

If thou canst Death defy,
If thy Faith is entire,
Press onward, for thine eye
Shall see thy heart's desire.

Beauty and love are nigh,
And with their deathless quire
Soon shall thy eager cry
Be numbered and expire.

Housman admired the poetry of Christina Rossetti, and his brother Laurence records his saying that posterity would probably place her above Swinburne. Some of her finest poems—those beginning 'When I am dead, my dearest', 'Does the road wind uphill all the way?', and 'Remember me when I am gone away', for example—might well have been written by Housman, just as some of his poems—LP xxvi: 'The half-moon westers low, my love', for example—might well have been written by her. I do not know of any borrowing from her by Housman, but the following similar passages may be quoted:

Maiden-Song, 82-3:

She sang the tears into his eyes,
The heart out of his breast.

ASL xiii. 11-12: The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;

xiv. 15-16: That's lost for everlasting
The heart out of his breast.

LP i. 22: 'Twill have the heart out of your breast;

Dost thou not care? 9-10:

Lord, it was well with me in time gone by
That cometh not again

ASL xl. 7-8: The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

xlvi. 8: Then it was well with me, in days ere I was born.

Shall I forget? 1-3:

Shall I forget on this side of the grave?
I promise nothing: you must wait and see,
Patient and brave.

MP xii. 1-2: I promise nothing: friends will part;
All things may end, for all began;

From many passages in Stevenson which suggest Housman I select three:

Songs of Travel, vii. 21-4:

Here, lady, lo! that servant stands
You picked from passing men,
And should you need nor heart nor hands
He bows and goes again.

Songs of Travel, xx:

The morning drum-call on my eager ear
Thrills unforgotten yet; the morning dew
Lies yet undried along my field of noon.
But now I pause at whiles in what I do,
And count the bell, and tremble lest I hear
(My work untrimmed) the sunset gun too soon.

Underwoods, ii:

The gauger walked with willing foot,
And aye the gauger played the flute;
And what should Master Gauger play
But *Over the hills and far away?*

Whene'er I buckle on my pack
And foot it gaily in the track,
A pleasant gauger, long since dead,
I hear you fluting on ahead.

You go with me the self-same way—
The self-same air for me you play;
For I do think and so do you
It is the tune to travel to.

For who would gravely set his face
 To go to this or t'other place?
 There's nothing under Heav'n so blue
 That's fairly worth the travelling to.

On every hand the roads begin,
 And people walk with zeal therein;
 But wheresoe'er the highways tend,
 Be sure there's nothing at the end.

Then follow you, wherever hie
 The travelling mountains of the sky,
 Or let the streams in civil mode
 Direct your choice upon a road;

For one and all, or high or low,
 Will lead you where you wish to go;
 And one and all go night and day
Over the hills and far away!

One of Charles Kingsley's poems—*Young and Old*—suggests
 Housman:

When all the world is young, lad,
 And all the trees are green;
 And every goose a swan, lad,
 And every lass a queen;
 Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
 And round the world away:
 Young blood must have its course, lad,
 And every dog his day.

When all the world is old, lad,
 And all the trees are brown;
 And all the sport is stale, lad,
 And all the wheels run down;
 Creep home, and take your place there,
 The spent and maimed among:
 God grant you find one face there,
 You loved when all was young.

Compare especially ASL iv. 21-4:

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
 Breath's a ware that will not keep.
 Up, lad: when the journey's over
 There'll be time enough to sleep.

ASL x. 6: To start the rusted wheel of things,

In Kingsley's poem 'lad' occurs six times. Housman uses the word sixty-eight times in ASL, eighteen times in LP, six times in MP, and once in the Memoir. Only thrice does he use it five times in the same poem, and only twice four times. Only five times—four times in ASL and once in the Memoir—does the word stand as a vocative at the end of a line, and never more than once in the same poem. Stevenson's poem—*New Poems*, xlvi—*in which 'lad' occurs eight times as a vocative at the end of a line, was first published in 1916.*

In the second stanza of Kingsley's poem 'among' is the only word which is not a monosyllable. The second stanza of LP xxxii is in the same metrical pattern and 'about' is the only word which is not a monosyllable. Other very monosyllabic poems of Housman are LP xxxv—12 lines, 2 disyllables, 82 monosyllables, ASL xxiv—12 lines, 4 disyllables, 76 monosyllables, and ASL xxi—35 lines, 2 trisyllables, 29 disyllables and 169 monosyllables.

I add three more examples of lines akin to some of Housman's:

When the sun steps from the billow
 On the steep and stairless sky,
 'Up!' I say, and quit my pillow,
 'Bed, for many an hour, good-bye!'

Swiftly to the East I turn me,
 Where the world's great lustre beams,
 Warm to bathe, but not to burn me,
 In its radiant fount of streams.

George Darley, *The Wild Bee's Tale*, 1-8.

Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
 Without identity,
 And never care how rain may steep
 Or snow may cover me!
 No promised heaven these wild desires
 Could all, or half, fulfil;
 No threatened hell, with quenchless fires,
 Subdue this quenchless will!

So say I, and still say the same;
 Still, to my death, will say—
 Three gods within this little frame
 Are warring night and day;
 Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
 They all are held in me,
 And must be mine, till I forget
 My present entity!

APPENDIX III

Oh, for the time, when in my breast
 Their struggles will be o'er!
 Oh, for the day, when I shall rest,
 And never suffer more!

Emily Brontë, *The Philosopher*, 7-20.

By rose-hung river and light-foot rill
 There are who rest not.

Swinburne, *Songs of Sunrise, Prelude*, 185-6.

Compare ASL liv. 3-8:

For many a rose-lipt maiden
 And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
 The lightfoot boys are laid;
 The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
 In fields where roses fade.

ALLITERATION, ETC.

Housman's skill in the use of alliteration is observable in many poems. In ASL lix, 'The Isle of Portland'—a poem twelve lines long—it may be noticed that by writing 'And sleep you fast for aye' in the last line but two, he not only avoids an ugliness which 'And sleep you sound for aye' would have caused by reason of the similar sound in the concluding line 'Than ever you found the day'; he also carries the 'f' sound right through the poem, much as Catullus does in the thirtieth of his poems. It shall be left for the reader to consider why in the third stanza of LP ii Housman preferred 'much' to 'far':

What evil luck soever
 For me remains in store,
 'Tis sure much finer fellows
 Have fared much worse before.

As in ASL lix Housman writes 'sleep you fast' instead of the commoner 'sleep you sound', so in ASL xxxiii. 13-16:

But now, since all is idle,
 To this lost heart be kind,
 Ere to a town you journey
 Where friends are ill to find.

he uses an archaic expression to avoid the ugliness of 'heart' and 'hard'.

Housman is indeed a very careful artist; but Professor O. L. Richmond in the *University of Edinburgh Journal*, vol. ix, no. 3, 1938, p. 235, rightly insists that he should not be spoken of as impeccable.¹ Professor Richmond finds fault with ASL xxvi and xxxv. In the first stanza of ASL vii:

When smoke stood up from Ludlow,
And mist blew off from Teme,
And blithe afield to ploughing
Against the morning beam
I strode beside my team,

the 'rhyme' in the second and fifth lines is not happy; and in the fifth stanza of ASL ix:

And naked to the hangman's noose
The morning clocks will ring
A neck God made for other use
Than strangling in a string.

one who hears the poem read aloud may be forgiven if he is in doubt whether the text has 'ring' or 'wring'. An awkwardness of rhyme occurs in ASL l. The second stanza runs:

We still had sorrows to lighten,
One could not be always glad,
And lads knew trouble at Knighton
When I was a Knighton lad.

and the final stanza runs:

'Tis a long way further than Knighton,
A quieter place than Clun,
Where doomsday may thunder and lighten
And little 'twill matter to one.

If it is excusable to see a blemish in the overcrowding of the last line of LP xviii—'To-night to lie in the rain'—the extra syllable in the penultimate line of LP xxxii—'they sought and found six feet of ground'—is given fine effect by the leonine rhyme.

VI

RHYMES

Housman is so careful a rhymers that his inexact rhymes, which number not more than about twenty, are worth setting out. 'Even' and 'heaven', which occurs three times in MP xiv, xxiii, and Memoir i, 'move' and 'love' in ASL xvi, 'remove' and 'love' in ASL xxxvi, and 'prove' and 'love' in ASL xlvii are all traditional; and so is 'far'

¹ See page 459.

and 'war' in ASL xxviii and LP xxxi. In LP xvii 'Africa' rhymes with 'away'. In MP xliii 'regard' rhymes with 'ruinward'. 'Come' rhymes with 'home' in ASL xix, xliv, and lvi. The same inexactness is seen in 'noose' and 'use' in ASL ix, in 'too' and 'new' in ASL xxx, in 'brews' and 'Muse' in ASL lxii, in 'do' and 'anew' in ASL xli, and in 'a-wooing' and 'pursuing' in Memoir xiii; with these compare 'cures' and 'yours' in LP xxix and 'yours' and 'endures' in MP xlviii. 'Helicon' rhymes with 'son' in LP xxiv and 'trader' with 'nadir' in MP iii. 'Over' and 'lover'—a rhyme said by H. C. K. Wyld, *Studies in English Rhyme from Surrey to Pope*, p. 82, to be imperfect in any age—rhyme in ASL xvi, lvii, and LP xlii. More surprising is 'morning' and 'returning' in LP xxv. MP ix. 5-8 contains a misprint:

Forth I must by hedgerow bower
To look at the leaves uncurled,
And stand in fields where cuckoo flowers
Are lying about the world.

VII

COMPOUND EPITHETS

From the following list of Housman's compound epithets, which contains 30 words from ASL, 3 from LP, 16 from MP, and 2 from the Memoir, common words like 'moonlit', 'short-lived', 'stock-still', 'starlit', 'single-hearted', 'short-handed', and 'night-long' have been excluded:

- ASL iv. 8: Straws the *sky-pavilioned* land.
x. 16: Her waving *silver-tufted* wand.
xiv. 19: *Sea-deep*, till doomsday morning,
xv. 6: Spent in *star-defeated* sighs,
xix. 24: The *still-defended* challenge cup.
xix. 25: And round that *early-laurelled* head
xx. 13: But in the *golden-sanded* brooks
xxvi. 14: Its *rainy-sounding* silver leaves;
xxxii. 2: And yon *twelve-winded* sky,
xxxiii. 9: This long and *sure-set* liking,
xxxvii. 5: Sank the *high-reared* head of Clee,
xli. 10: The beautiful and *death-struck* year:
xli. 17: And like a *skylit* water stood
xlii. 3: The *world-wide* air was azure
xlii. 28: And *far-discovered* town,
xlii. 34: With *sunstruck* vanes afield
xlii. 35: And *cloud-led* shadows sailing
xlii. 37: By *valley-guarded* granges

- It will be noticed that as many as seven compound epithets are used in ASL xlii, a poem which contains two of the seven examples in Housman's poetry of a substantive placed between two adjectives:

- Ff**

- LP i. 33: Too fast to yonder strand forlorn
 MP xx. 2: Leapt once with dancing fires divine;
 xxxviii. 6: For world-wide labourers worn;

Repetitive as Housman sometimes is, he avoids the repetition of a compound epithet. Except for 'far known', once with a hyphen and once without, the only one he uses more than once is 'world-wide'. A large number of his compound epithets are probably coinages. 'Far-discovered' shows his care to avoid the 'dim-discovered' of James Thomson and Collins.

VIII

OLD-FASHIONED AND NEW WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

Housman is a user of old-fashioned words and expressions and an inventor of new ones.¹ These are some of the former:

- ASL ii. 9-10: And since to look at things in bloom
 Fifty springs are little *room*,
 iii. 15: The lads you leave will *mind you*
 (So again in ASL iii. 27; xii. 7; xxxvii. 25.)
 vi. 4: Maiden, you can heal his *ail*.
 vii. 2: And mist *blew off* from Teme,
 xiii. 13: 'Tis paid with sighs a *plenty*
 xxv. 3: We needs must *jangle*,
 xxxiii. 16: Where friends are *ill* to find.
 xxxvi. 2: The moon stands *blank* above;
 xli. 18: The *azured* wood.
 xlv. 7: Stand up and *end* you,
 lix. 6: Never to *stir forth* free,
 LP xix. 23: And I will *sort* with comrades
 xxix. 11: *timbal's* rattle
 MP v. 1: Leaves on the *shaws*
 xxix. 2: My collars home with *ravelled* ends;

Here are some of the latter:

- ASL xix. 14: Cannot see the *record cut*,
 LP xx. 3: *winterfalls*
 xxv. 3: *midland navel-stone*
 xxix. 13: *death-notes*
 Memoir ii. 2: *fleeted* main

¹ See also Appendix II.

Here, in conclusion, are some other memorable examples of Housman's use of the English language:

- ASL iv. 7-8: And the tent of night in tatters
 Straws the sky-pavilioned land.
- ix. 8: The dead man stood on air.
- xix. 22: The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
- xxi. 8: the coloured counties,
- xxiii. 15: They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage
 of man,
- xxxii. 3-4: The stuff of life to knit me
 Blew hither:
- xlii. 50-2: Of dancing leaflets whirled
 From all the woods that autumn
 Bereaves in all the world.
- lv. 3-4: Still, I think, in newer veins
 Frets the changeless blood of man.
- LP i. 35: To flush the fading tinges
- i. 41: When you and I are spilt on air
- ix. 25-6: The troubles of our proud and angry dust
 Are from eternity, and shall not fail.
- xv. 1-4: He stood, and heard the steeple
 Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.
 One, two, three, four, to market-place and people
 It tossed them down.
- xvi. 16: Drinks the valiant air of dawn.
- xix. 19: Hues in the east assemble
- xxi. 4: The silver sail of dawn.
- xxxiv. 29: The sumless tale of sorrow
- xxxvi. 7-8: The vast and moon-eclipsing cone of night,
 Her towering foolscap of eternal shade.
- xxxvi. 10: The belfries tingle to the noonday chime.
- xl. 17-18: Or beeches strip in storms for winter
 And stain the wind with leaves.
- MP xii. 6: When answered passions thin to air;

APPENDIX IV

DATES OF A. E. HOUSMAN'S POEMS

THE following letter from Sir Sydney Cockerell appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* on November 7, 1936. I reprint it with his permission.—G.R.

To the Editor of THE TIMES.

Sir,—At the end of 'More Poems' Mr. Laurence Housman provides lovers of his brother's poetry with an interesting page of dates. Of the poems there dated nineteen are in 'A Shropshire Lad', five are in 'Last Poems', two are in 'More Poems', and one ('Morning up the Eastern stair') was withdrawn from the new volume and is still unpublished.¹

On November 10, 1911, I had a talk with Housman about 'A Shropshire Lad', and next day made the following note in my copy of the book: 'He told me last night that he wrote some of these poems in 1894, but the majority of them in the first five months of 1895 at a time of ill-health, and partly perhaps as a reaction from a learned controversy in which he was then engaged. They came to him willy-nilly, and since then he has written a small number of poems under similar emotional conditions, but not enough to make another volume.' On another occasion I asked him whether he at once realized their merit. His answer was that he had, because they were so unlike anything else that had come to him.

On October 28, 1922, very soon after its publication, I discussed 'Last Poems' with him, and he dictated to me the following dates of its contents. Though many of these dates are only approximate, they form a useful supplement to the five dates for this volume given in 'More Poems', and modify those there given for 'In mid-nights of November', 'The chestnut casts its flambeaux', and 'Onward led the road again'.

We'll to	April, 1922
I. Beyond the moor	c. 1905
II. As I gird	c. 1900
III. Her strong	1895; taken out of 'A Shropshire Lad'
IV. Oh hard	'Academy', 1899
V. The Queen	Time of Boer War

¹ Since Sir Sydney's letter was written this poem has been published as XI, 'God's Acre', in the 'Additional Poems' on p. 221 of *A.E.H.* (1937).

VI. I 'listed	Time of Boer War
VII. In valleys	April, 1922, except last stanza, which was written long ago
VIII. Soldier from	Chiefly 1905
IX. The chestnut	Begun <i>c.</i> 1900 (really Feb., 1896); last stanza April, 1922
X. Could man	<i>c.</i> 1900-1905
XI. Yonder	1895, intended for 'A Shropshire Lad', but not used
XII. The laws	<i>c.</i> 1900
XIII. What sound	Begun 1905, finished April, 1922; based on the tune of a chantry heard at Hereford
XIV. The night	Before 1910
XV. He stood	1921
XVI. Star and coronal	Composed at intervals 1900-1922
XVII. The Wain	For the Duchess of Sutherland's book, 'Wayfarers' Love', pub. 1904
XVIII. The rain	First and last stanzas <i>c.</i> 1902. Finished April, 1922
XIX. In midnights	Begun 1895; finished <i>c.</i> 1905
XX. The night	April, 1922
XXI. The fairies	<i>c.</i> 1900-1905
XXII. The sloe	Finished April, 1922
XXIII. In the morning	1895
XXIV. He is here	Begun 1900; finished April, 1922
XXV. 'Tis mute	<i>c.</i> 1904
XXVI. The half-moon	April, 1922
XXVII. The sigh	Soon after 1900
XXIX. Wake not	March 30, 1922
XXX. I walked alone	Begun 1910; finished 1922
XXXI. Onward led	Begun 1905; finished April, 1922
XXXII. When I would	After 1910
XXXIII. When the eye	August, 1900
XXXIV. The orchards	<i>c.</i> 1905
XXXV. When first	Before 1910
XXXVI. West and away	First stanza 1922; others earlier
XXXVIII. Oh stay	After Boer War
XXXIX. When summer's	1920-22
XL. Tell me not here	April, 1922

Yours faithfully,

SYDNEY COCKERELL.

APPENDIX V

PROFESSOR F. W. OLIVER, who, when Housman went to University College, had been himself on the staff for some four years, contributed to the Foundation Number of *University College Magazine* (March 1937) the following paper which through his kindness I am here able to reprint. This is the paper referred to in Professor R. W. Chambers's *Man's Unconquerable Mind*.¹ Professor F. W. Oliver was, from 1888 to 1929, Quain Professor of Botany at University College.—G. R.

A. E. HOUSMAN

SOME RECOLLECTIONS

A characteristic feature of University College, as I remember it, was its power of attracting and its instinct in selecting the right personalities to occupy its Chairs. Now and then there were narrow squeaks, as when Sir William Ramsay got in by a single vote at the Committee of Selection (1888), but that was unusual.

Housman came to us from the Patent Office, by a side door, so to speak. But we were not long left in ignorance of the quality of our recruit, as Housman was almost at once deputed, at the opening of the 1892-3 Session, to deliver the customary Introductory Lecture to the Faculties at which the subject chosen was *Learning*. He thus joined a remarkable group in the closing decade of last century which in addition to his own name included those of Ker, Platt, Weldon, Pearson, Ramsay and Starling. Of this group Housman was the last survivor.

At an early period Housman and I found common ground in our love of country. Although a botanist, I was not insensible to the artistic and even poetic sides of my subject, and this formed a bond between us. But it remains a regret that I should never have shared a country ramble in his company, much less one of those trips to France in which he often indulged.

The next matter I recall was that Housman's technical knowledge of eating and drinking was early discovered at the Professors' Dining Club, of which he became Treasurer. Housman was at his best at the dinner table. If I had in those days the rudiments of a taste in wines, it was definitely cultivated and enlarged through contact with Housman.

On one occasion there was a move in the Club to admit women members of the staff, who were now accreting. This was killed by

¹ London: Cape, 1939.

Housman's invective. And I think he was right. If women had been admitted they would have come rather in the spirit of conducting a 'children's hour'. It is proper that men should dine together, and that women should partake of their poached eggs and coffee in their own way; whilst there are occasions (apart from the domestic circle) when both may sit together at a common table. Had women accepted admission to the Club, a good thing would have been destroyed for something different—something unpredictable, from which, like marriage, there could be no honourable release.

Then came an incident to be remembered with gratitude. In those days, when chemists could still search for new elements with some prospect of success, Ramsay and the then Lord Rayleigh startled the world by discovering Argon. It was an old-fashioned discovery, plain to all, and not obscured by such bugbears as relativity and the quantum theory. So it was decided to celebrate Ramsay's share by a dinner at U.C.L., and it fell to my lot as a junior Professor to make the arrangements (this would be in March, 1895). The day before the dinner was to be held there came a telegram from Sir Henry Roscoe (whom I had secured to move the principal toast) regretting his inability to be present, and in the emergency I remembered to have heard from an Oxford source that Housman was a more than competent performer on such occasions. So I approached him in the matter, explaining my predicament and asking him without any nonsense whether he would fill the gap. This he consented to do, and his amazingly witty speech was the crowning success of the evening. The three after-dinner speakers I best remember as outstanding were Birrell, Housman and Michael Foster, all of whom were at one time or another on the staff at U.C.L. I should place Housman at least as high as Birrell in effectiveness (though of course the latter was much more widely known), but he lacked perhaps the wider humanity of Michael Foster. Foster was also helped by his high falsetto notes and curious sing-song delivery which actually enhanced the effect of his utterances.

Of the many reasons which might have influenced Housman to act on this occasion, I prefer to think that it was kindness of heart for a colleague in adversity.

There is another side of Housman's activities at U.C.L. to which I have seen no reference, and this was his power of leadership and decisive action in a time of crisis. Such a time came to the College in the year 1900, when it found itself deeply indebted to its bankers and with no visible means of escape from the financial mire. Housman was on the Council at that time, and being likewise a member I had every opportunity of knowing the part he played. Housman

had the full confidence and moral support of the general body of Professors, of whom he was in effect the spokesman and leader. The plan devised for our salvation included the replacement of the then Secretary by the appointment of Gregory Foster (then quite a young man), with Professor Carey Foster as Principal for a period of five years. There was also an offer on the part of the Professors to forgo a substantial percentage of their stipend, an offer however which the Council did not find it necessary to accept. Nevertheless, this gesture was not without effect in consolidating the future policy of the College and bringing everybody into line.

In due course the financial stringency abated through the generosity of an 'Anonymous Donor' who paid our debt (£30,000), Gregory Foster matured and took over the office of Principal (later Provost) at the end of five years, whilst under his leadership the College, becoming merged as a constituent College in the University, entered on a phase of expansion and prosperity.

The critical day (*circa* Midsummer, 1900) on which these measures were adopted by the Council is still fresh in my mind, and how the President, Lord Reay (in the absence of the Secretary whose delinquencies we had been considering), detained Housman at the end of the meeting to draft the minutes, and how I discharged the humbler office of telegraphing on Housman's behalf to his friends who were awaiting him at Henley (it was regatta week) that he would be joining them at a later hour than arranged, but that they should 'keep supper' for him.

When Housman was translated to the Cambridge Professorship (1911) it is to be gathered from the admirable published *Sketch*¹ by A. S. F. Gow that he did not much alter. The habit of the recluse seems to have grown on him, perhaps accelerated by the fact that his well-established fame as a scholar and poet may have deterred his Cambridge contemporaries from invading his privacy. Housman was always a little shy, and his shyness may have been intensified by his having to begin all over again in middle life.

Of several of our Professors who have left Gower Street in this way I have suspected they would have been happier had they remained where they were understood and appreciated. And the sequel has more than once seemed to confirm this suspicion.

Housman's genius seemed to develop along two distinct lines. One, which might conform to the definition of genius as 'an infinite capacity for taking pains', led to the high position he reached in the technical field of scholarship: the other, inborn but allied with his love of country, begat *A Shropshire Lad*. F. W. OLIVER.

¹ A. E. Housman: *a Sketch*. Cambridge University Press, 1936.

APPENDIX VI

THE MANILIUS DEDICATION TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

ALFRED HOUSMAN dedicated the first volume of his *Manilius* to his friend M. J. Jackson in a set of Latin elegiacs which I have permission to print; and I may also print a distinguished translation into English by Edmund Wilson, the American critic, already known to Housman's admirers for his essay in *The Triple Thinkers*.¹ This English version originally appeared in the *New York Bookman* in October 1927—G.R.

(a)

SODALI MEO

M. I. JACKSON

HARVM IITTERARVM CONTEMPTORI

Signa pruinosae uariantia luce caernas
noctis et extincto lumina nata die
solo rure uagi lateque tacentibus aruis
surgere nos una uidimus oceano.
uidimus: illa prius, cum luce carebat uterque,
uiderat in latium prona poeta mare,
seque memor terra mortalem matre creatum
intulit aeternis carmina sideribus,
clara nimis post se genitis exempla daturus
ne quis forte deis fidere uellet homo.
nam supero sacrata polo complexaque mundum
sunt tamen indignam carmina passa luem,
et licet ad nostras enarint naufraga terras
scriptoris nomen uix tenere sui.
non ego mortalem uexantia sidera sortem
aeternosue tuli sollicitare deos,
sed cito casurae tactus uirtutis amore
humana uolui quaerere nomen ope,
uirque uirum legi fortemque breuemque sodalem
qui titulus libro uellet inesse meo.
o uictrix meis dicam periturene chartis,
nomine sed certe uiuere digne tuo,
haec tibi ad auroram surgentia signa secuto
hesperia trado munera missa plaga.

¹ London: Oxford University Press; New York: Harcourt, Brace.

en cape: nos populo uenit inlatura perempto
 ossa solo quae det dissoluenda dies
 fataque sortitas non immortalia mentes
 et non aeterni uincla sodalicii.

Dedication for a Book

A. E. Housman: *Signa pruinosa variantia luce cavernas*—

Those starry signs that freak with light
 The frosty caverns of the night,
 Sea-born and bright when daylight dies—
 Together we have watched them rise,
 Late wandering, where fields lay wide,
 The lone and silent countryside.
 So once, while still our place was blank,
 The poet watched them where they sank,
 Setting below the Latian sea;
 And, mindful of mortality,
 Earth-sprung nor spared from earth for long,
 He looked aloft and launched his song
 Against the everlasting stars—
 Alas! to leave, with many scars,
 A warning, all too plain, of odds
 Which mock the man who trusts the gods.
 For, though to Heaven dedicate,
 With all the universe for freight,
 His verses found misfortune fast
 And, washed upon our strand at last,
 Shipwrecked and battered, blurred and lame,
 They scarce can tell their maker's name.

I have not plied, importunate,
 The stars that harass human fate
 Nor, begging guidance from above,
 Besieged the gods, but, touched with love
 Of mortal glory swift to fade,
 Have sought a name through human aid
 And, man, have chosen among men,
 To stead no heaven-assailing pen,
 A comrade, mortal-lived but stout,
 Whose name shall bring my volume out.
 —'O comrade', let me say, 'whose name
 May perish with my pages' fame,

Yet worthy through thine own to live:
From human hand to hand, I give—
To thee who followest away
Those rising signs, to seek the day—
This present from a western shore:
Take it: to-morrow runs before,
With those whom life no longer owns
To lay our flesh and loose our bones—
To dull with all-benumbing thrust
Our wits that wake not from the dust,
Nor spare, with learning's lettered leaf,
The bonds of fellowship as brief'.

EDMUND WILSON.

APPENDIX VII

BIOGRAPHICAL REMINISCENCES

I AM fortunate in being permitted to make use here of these reminiscences, the work of one whose association with A. E. Housman was over many years of a kind that gives what is written no slight authority. They are by Miss Joan Thomson, the daughter of the late Sir J. J. Thomson, O.M., Master of Trinity from 1918 to 1940, and were not written for publication.—G.R.

Year after year, as the leaf-buds and fruit-blossom open at Easter-time, the Backs and College gardens of Cambridge take upon themselves a loveliness that is unexpected, for no one can ever fully remember how beautiful was the last spring. Most people make casual remarks as to the earliness or lateness of the bloom in any particular year, but if one met Professor Housman returning from his regular afternoon walk it was possible to hear exactly how many days in advance of or behind their scheduled date were the pear or cherry trees. It was very characteristic of Housman to combine a precise mathematical accuracy with his great love for the beauty of flowers. For several years as a young man he had noted the date on which he first saw the blossom of each of the English fruit trees, and from this information he calculated the average time for the flowers to appear. His College, Trinity, planted cherry trees along either side of the avenue, it might be thought in compliment to the author of the famous short poem 'Loveliest of trees . . .'; actually Professor Housman in a way contradicted himself by declaring that possibly the blossom of a pear tree had the purest beauty of any of the English fruits. Those cuckoo-flowers of which he wrote in his poetry were really one of his two favourite flowers, the other being the daffodil. Violets had the scent he preferred, though he liked that of magnolias for its association with his boyhood, when a huge bowl of them stood throughout their season in his home. Professor Housman loved flowers both aesthetically and sentimentally. He liked brilliant colours and regretted that he never saw in his old age sweet peas of the intensely pure red that he remembered from his youth. Scarlet anemones he admired and welcomed as a relief from the prevailing yellow of the spring.

He had a great power of appreciating the immediate surroundings of life, a trait which showed itself particularly in his superb discrimination regarding food and wine. Not only did Professor

Housman appraise what he ate with perfect judgement; he actually knew how the dishes he preferred should be made, and would give precise instructions to the College cook, or even to a friend in conversation. The compliment paid him by a Paris restaurant,¹ where a dish—Barbue Housman—was called after him—the fish was prepared with cheese and served with very small new potatoes—gave him real pleasure. Professor Housman's taste in food was by no means confined to the exotic; roast duck was one of his favourite dishes, provided sufficient onions appeared in the stuffing. He was scathing in his comments on those cooks who stinted their use of the onion and still more so, if possible, regarding people who could not make Irish stew to his liking. Bread and butter he abominated—he said it even distressed him to watch another person eat anything so unpalatable.

To talk with Housman was to realize what great beauty and force there is in the English language, and when he used it in abuse of those he had a contempt for he was superb. These unfortunate people included printers, from whose shortcomings he had suffered personally. He said that there might exist in the world people as stupid as they were; it was even conceivable there might be a few as conceited, but utterly impossible that any others could be at once so stupid and so conceited as were printers. He alluded to their propensity for making small alterations in a manuscript, as if they knew better than the author how to punctuate.

Professor Housman once told a story at dinner concerning a lady notorious for her tiresome behaviour. When he had finished his neighbour asked him, 'Did you ever meet anyone who liked her?' 'I don't want to', was the prompt answer. Among the Fellows of his College was a foreigner who was remarkable for his apparent utter inability to master any language. Conscious that, after years of living in England, his English was still deplorable, he asked Professor Housman how he should improve it. 'Talk to me', he was told. Housman was frankly astonished when another Fellow of Trinity College, a Russian, was unable to tell him the word in his own language for rhubarb, saying that he had never met with the vegetable until he came to England and did not believe that it was known in Russia. Professor Housman afterwards told a friend that he found it hard to believe that the man really came from Russia after all, for the Greek word for rhubarb was actually the name of a river in Greece. Such apparent lack of interest in food as this Russian showed was amazing to Professor Housman.

¹ The Tour d'Argent. See p. 115.

He kept an almost ascetically slight figure to the end of his life. His powers of restraint and self-control were very great. Wine he was accustomed to drink regularly, besides taking other forms of alcohol such as beer, when, well after he became seventy, some doctor told him that it would be good for his nerves to abstain from alcohol. For months he followed this advice, which was not a success, as most people could have predicted, but the strength of will he must have exerted during a long period¹ was very characteristic of him.

Professor Housman loved to be amused; he had a keen sense of humour, and he would even invite those he knew well to tease him, sometimes putting the sentences into their mouths. The many, mostly unsuccessful, efforts to draw his portrait amused him; he had been told, he said, that he was an exceptionally difficult subject because he appeared to lack cheekbones! The artist, Rothenstein, was a friend of his who sometimes stayed with him in College and who made several sketches of him. Housman said that the best of these Rothenstein kept for himself, the next in merit he gave to his sitter, and the least successful he sold. It was bought by Trinity College, but fortunately for them Housman later on exchanged it for the one in his own possession.

Though he did not often talk about himself yet he would sometimes do so, concealing the fact behind the fiction that he was alluding to a third person. On one occasion he was discussing with a friend a recent award of the Order of Merit, and he mentioned one or two distinguished people who had declined this honour. His companion well knew that it was supposed he had himself declined it, and she said she wondered why anyone should wish to refuse that particular award for great ability. Housman instantly informed her at length of the various reasons that prompted such an action. He did not disclose that he had done so himself, but remarked, half-wistfully, at the end, 'You know, it is really a great distinction to have refused the O.M.'

No one can have responded much worse than Housman to the efforts his friends sometimes made to introduce him to famous people who were very eager to meet him. Not infrequently the poet would take no notice conversationally even of one of the greatest in the land. This may have been sometimes due to the fact that he was apt to take a strong antipathy to a person at first sight, merely if it happened that he disliked the shape of the individual's nose or his complexion. So strong might this antipathy be that

¹ This surprises me. I could not have sat at table with A.E.H. during this "long period" or I should have noticed his abstention.—G.R.

Housman would find it almost impossible to look at the person concerned, far less to associate with him. The reverse—that of feeling strongly drawn towards a person at first sight—he thought he had never experienced. It was pathetic that the idea of Housman's desire to be aloof was so deep-rooted in the minds of almost all who knew him that hardly anyone felt able to come forward and give him the ordinary human sympathy he desperately needed. He very rarely greeted even those whom he knew best when he met them in the street and most people were shy of inquiring about his health when it was known that he had been seriously ill. If genuine affection and sympathy were offered him, however, Housman responded in full and gave unexpected proofs of deep feeling. He would give of his very best in conversation with someone who cared for him, even if that were a comparatively uneducated person. His intellect that would expose ignorance in the very clever could make someone of most ordinary capacity appear gifted under the influence of his stimulating talk. For admiration Housman appeared to have little use, but he sorely needed affection. He naturally ranked his own intellectual powers very highly; his poetry he considered far below that of Matthew Arnold, and he appeared to be entirely unaware that he was lovable in his own personality, quite apart from his great gifts. Probably very few ever heard of his kindnesses, such as the visit he paid to his bedmaker in the course of her last illness. He was not really cynical; a girl who sat next to him at dinner discussed a play with him, in which the principal character was a woman of appalling callousness. The girl argued that such a woman was hardly conceivable and ought not to have been introduced in the play, but Housman refused to admit that he saw anything abnormal in a woman of such coldness. At the end of the evening, however, when he said good-bye to the girl, he told her quietly and deliberately, 'Keep your high opinion of your own sex.'

To the end of his life Housman retained a certain quality of youthfulness about himself. When talking of something that interested him his manner had a freshness and vigour such as other men often lose after they become thirty. Once he had embarked upon conversation his ideas, expressed in exquisite English, would come with a rush, as if they were glad of the unusual opportunity for expression. It may have been partly his vivid memory of small events in his childhood that helped to give Housman his feeling of youthfulness. He recalled, for instance, his bitter disappointment as a very small child when he was not allowed to buy an amber necklace, brought to his home by a gypsy woman who wanted to sell her wares, on the grounds that it was only suitable for a girl.

His quality of youth showed itself also in his enterprise, for he was one of the first to make use of air travel: although he was already elderly he travelled to Paris that way, before means had been found to increase the comfort of aeroplanes by reducing their noise. His interest in food and flowers added to his pleasure in continental travel: Turkey and Sicily were countries he had visited with particular enjoyment.

Towards the end of his life Professor Housman declared that he knew none of the younger people in the University. He had the impression they were not interested in him, whereas most of them would have been more than delighted to have the privilege of any conversation with him. Perhaps Professor Housman half regretted his own isolation, although he did not enjoy making new acquaintances. He showed a mild interest in some people of distinction in science but declared it was almost always disappointing actually to meet anyone. He seemed, in fact, to expect even his friends to disappoint him. And yet he could be greatly entertained by conversation; his love of delicate humour may have been partly responsible for his enthusiastic admiration for Jane Austen's work, which he ranked incomparably higher than that of the Brontës, although he admitted that Emily wrote some good poetry. Good critical taste was so essential to Housman that it was very difficult to persuade him to say whether he liked a piece of music he had just heard if he had not known it before. He would declare that he did not know enough of music to be sure of his judgement, and he could not bear the idea of admiring anything unworthy.

Professor Housman had another side to his life, apart from his brilliant intellect and his exquisite power over words. He was capable of emotion terrifying in its strength. There were few outlets for his affection and it was only very rarely possible to catch a glimpse of the man he might have been. For the last ten years or so of his life he regularly went to tea on Christmas Day with friends who provided a supply of crackers. Professor Housman willingly did his share in pulling these and he always punctiliously insisted upon reading aloud the verse contained as a motto. Coming from the lips of the author of the *Shropshire Lad* the effect of these jingles was bizarre indeed! Once the baby grandson of his host was in the house, and had received among his Christmas presents an attractive woolly animal that did not appear exactly to correspond with anything seen at the Zoo. Professor Housman picked it up, sat it upon his knee, watching the child playing near him, and he looked as if he were then his natural self. His amazing power of self-control must have been necessary indeed to him when the

experience came that was the tragedy of his life. How intensely he had suffered might be guessed by anyone who saw his face as it sometimes appeared at the end of one of his long walks. Perhaps he had recalled some of his own wretchedness as he walked alone and the sadness in his face was as poignant as on the face of a man experiencing the bitterness of sorrow for the first time. Professor Housman was ashamed of the strength of his own feelings: he said that it was not the part of a first-rate man to allow his whole life to be spoilt by a woman. He argued that a really great man is not also a great lover, because he can shake his life free from the troubles of love. Housman would not tolerate the idea that it was possible for a man truly to love more than one woman in his life; anyone who considered that he had done so had simply never really loved at all. It was perhaps because his emotional nature went so far deeper than that of ordinary men that Housman instinctively felt lonely with most of his contemporaries, who would be even less capable of imagining the intensity of his feelings than of rising to his intellectual level. Housman had to face the sorrows of his life alone; the greatest compensation which his nature gave him being the power of receiving ecstatic pleasure from great poetry and from loveliness in the countryside. To hear Professor Housman speak even a few lines of good poetry was a revelation of the mysterious power which lay within it and of the musical loveliness of which language is capable. He talked of poetry with almost a note of gratitude in his voice—as if it had given him a great deal of joy. His taste was comprehensive, for he admired Macaulay and Kipling yet thought that probably Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' is the most beautiful poem in our language. Great literature and pleasure in his surroundings of gardens, countryside—though he cared neither for the sea nor for mountains—good food and wine, and occasional conversation were left to Professor Housman as consolations. It might be said that life had given him everything—fame, adequate means, and congenial occupation—but he lacked what was to himself the most important thing of all. He had the Divine gift of Charity, the power to love, in full measure, and he paid for it to the last farthing with his unsatisfied need of being loved himself.

JOAN THOMSON.

Trinity Lodge,
Cambridge.

APPENDIX VIII

HOUSMAN INTO GREEK AND LATIN

A LETTER from Mr. Alexander Mackenzie of George Watson's College, Edinburgh, appearing in the *Observer* of May 10, 1936, gives a version in Greek by the late A. W. Mair of Edinburgh University of the famous Epitaph which I am told is well worth including in these Appendices. Mr. Mackenzie says:

'This version must be one of the last that Mair did. It is not included in the memorial volume of his versions and poems, which was published in 1929. It shows that Housman owed not a little to the Greek poets, of whom, says Professor Grierson, Mair was the last.

'In the chiselled style of the "Epitaph" may be seen the influence of Pindar and Aeschylus, just as in some of Housman's other verses, such as the lovely "With rue my heart is laden", we feel the influence of Meleager and other writers in the Greek Anthology.

Οἷδ', εὖθ' ἔδος μὲν ἤριπεν οὐρανοῦ
γαίας δ' ἐρεμνοὶ πυθμένες εὖτ' ἐλίασθεν,
τέχνην τὰν ἐπὶ μισθῷ
ἐργάτιν ἄμφεπον ἀλλὰ νῦν
ἀρόμενοι μισθὸν τέθνασιν.
ᾧμοις ἐρείδοντες πόλον οὐρανοῦ
οἷδ' ἔσταν, ἔσταν πυθμένες αὐτίκα γαίας.
καὶ κόσμον τὸν ἀγήρων,
ὃς θεῶ οὐ μέλε, τῶνδ' ὅμως
δύναμις ὠνητὴ σάωσεν.

'With line 1 may be compared Pindar, *Nem.* vi. 3; with line 2 Homer, *Od.* xxiv. 106 and Aeschylus, *P.V.* 1046; with lines 3-4 Pindar, *Isth.* ii. 6; with line 6 Aeschylus, *P.V.* 351; and with line 10 Thucydides, i. 121.'

Alexander Mackenzie.

This letter I showed to Professor Fletcher who sent me at once the following note, which should be read in connexion with it and in connexion with and in continuation of his comment on p. 408 on *A.S.L.* xlviii. 16: 'Oh why did I awake? when shall I sleep again?' This poem, Professor Fletcher writes, has been translated into Greek elegiacs by H. Johnson in the *Classical Review*, xxvi, 1912, pp. 205-6, and by H. Rackham in *Greere and Rome*, ii, 1932, p. 56. The *Classical Review* contains a Greek elegiac version of *A.S.L.* liv by

L. W. Hunter in volume xxx, 1916, p. 63, and a rendering into two Greek elegiac couplets of the Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries, which appeared in *The Times* of 31 October, 1917, before it was included as poem xxxvii in *L.P.*, by J. M. Edmonds in volume xxxi, 1917, p. 204. Latin versions of several poems in *A.S.L.* are given by Mr. Justice Asquith in his *Versions from A Shropshire Lad* published in 1929. A version of *L.P.* xxv in Latin Alcaics by E. A. Barber is to be found in *Greece and Rome*, i, 1931, p. 63, and Latin versions of other poems of Housman, in whole or in part, are included in several collections; for example, *Renderings into Greek and Latin Verse from the Westminster Gazette*,¹ edited by H. F. Fox (Oxford, Blackwell, 1906), has on p. 25 a rendering into Latin Elegiacs of the last five stanzas of *A.S.L.* xix by E. D. Stone; J. P. Postgate, *Translation and Translations* (London, Bell, 1922), p. 175, gives a translation into Latin hendecasyllables of the Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries; B. Anderton, *Into the By-Ways* (University of London Press, 1934), p. 19, gives a translation of *A.S.L.* ii into Latin Sapphic stanzas; A. B. Ramsay gives Latin elegiac translations of *A.S.L.* lv and of the Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries on pages 47 and 73 of his *Ros Rosarum* (Cambridge University Press, 1925) and a translation into Latin Alcaics of *L.P.* xxxv on page 37 of his *Fronde Salicis* (Cambridge University Press, 1935). Probably the earliest published rendering of a poem of Housman into Greek or Latin was the version of *A.S.L.* xv in Greek elegiacs by J. A. Platt, Housman's friend and colleague as Professor of Greek at University College, London, which appeared in the *Classical Review*, xi, 1897, p. 70.

G. B. A. FLETCHER.

¹ Housman did not approve of the making of these 'renderings'. See pp. 207 and 208 above. I do not know that he ever heard of the book itself; at any rate he did not mention its existence to me.—G. R.

APPENDIX IX

HOUSMAN AND THE ENGLISH COMPOSER

IN connexion with a recital of *Shropshire Lad* settings announced by the B.B.C. for April 16, 1940, the *Listener* published on April 11, 1940, the following article by Mr. Stanley Bayliss. I have permission to print it here:

'A. E. Housman's first volume of poems, "*A Shropshire Lad*", was published in 1896, and composers were soon attracted by it. For a time Housman's position in regard to English song-writers was likened to the relationship that used to exist between German composers and Heine and that which still exists between French musicians and Verlaine. Even the most uninstructed of musical laymen must know at least one setting of Housman: Graham Peel's "*In Summer-time on Bredon*". His second volume, the "*Last Poems*" of 1922, did not stimulate the imagination of composers to the same extent. And I have been unable to discover whether any of the posthumous "*More Poems*" of 1936 have been set to music. According to a bibliography of settings of Housman poems, published in *The Dominant* for February, 1928, Dr. Vaughan Williams has set five of the "*Last Poems*". They are marked "Unpublished" and are, I seem to remember, for voice and violin. That they have remained unpublished must indicate that their composer is dissatisfied with them. And that is curious, for in "*On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble*" he gave us some of the most successful of all settings of "*A Shropshire Lad*". The spirit of the time had changed.

'Parry, Stanford and Elgar did not, I think, set anything of Housman's: nor have William Walton or Benjamin Britten. From their contemporaries Walton chose the Sitwells and Britten W. H. Auden. It is the musical generation of Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, Arnold Bax, Ivor Gurney and John Ireland that was chiefly influenced by "*A Shropshire Lad*". Why was this? Why, for instance, did Vaughan Williams turn to that particular volume? Was not Housman a cynic? And is not Vaughan Williams, with his lifelong love of folk music, a composer with a faith underlying his work? The composer who, after going through the war of 1914-1918, came back and wrote one of the quietest of works—his *Pastoral Symphony*—surely could not have subscribed to the fatalism so easily lampooned in such parodies as "*What still alive at twenty-two, A clean, upstanding chap like you?*"

'There are, I fancy, at least three reasons why the poems of

"A Shropshire Lad" made so great an appeal to the composers of the early nineteen-hundreds. First, they contained so many phrases eloquent of the beauties of the English countryside, and fell in with the mood so admirably anthologized by E. V. Lucas in "The Open Road" (1899). Stevenson's "Songs of Travel" and "A Shropshire Lad" have something in common. It was probably the lines "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now Is hung with bloom along the bough" rather than "And since to look at things in bloom Fifty springs are little room", that attracted George Butterworth. It was this song which he elaborated into his orchestral rhapsody, "A Shropshire Lad".

"The second reason is that these poems had an echo of the questioning that became more and more rife after the two Jubilees of Queen Victoria and the shocks of the Boer War. And, thirdly, they were very English. They were steeped in tradition, and in them could be found reminiscences of such diverse figures as Johnson and Keble. English composers at that moment were rather self-conscious. They were trying to throw off the yoke of the German tradition in which English musicians had been educated. At the same time, they were trying to rid themselves of the type of lyric so common to Victorian songs and part-songs: the kind of verse that H. F. Chorley wrote in his English libretto to Gounod's "Faust". But while the poems in "A Shropshire Lad" greatly pleased our composers, the settings by no means appealed to the author. A gramophone record of Gervase Elwes singing Vaughan Williams' "On Wenlock Edge" caused Housman to put his hands over his ears.'¹

STANLEY BAYLISS.

¹ See p. 394 above and Percy Withers's *A Buried Life* (p. 82).

APPENDIX X

WHEN in 1911 Alfred Housman was appointed to the Kennedy Professorship of Latin at Cambridge he invited O. L. Richmond, now Professor of Latin at Edinburgh, to take his place at University College, London, for the one term during which the two appointments overlapped. Some years before Housman's death Professor Richmond prepared for an Edinburgh audience a lecture on Housman's life and work. That lecture was again delivered, with omissions and new matter, in 1937, to the 'Symposium', Edinburgh, and it appeared, again with several passages omitted, 'for reasons of space', in the Autumn number 1938 of the *University of Edinburgh Journal*. The same consideration, reasons of space, has made it impossible for me to print here the whole of the paper and it is natural, interesting though they are, to omit the biographical parts: I have been mostly concerned with what Professor Richmond has to say of Housman as a Latinist. I am indeed grateful to him for allowing these quotations. It is interesting to note that in March 1939 Professor Richmond was asked by the editor of Bursian's *Jahresbericht* to write an obituary notice of A.E.H.—nearly three years after his death. That week Hitler marched into Prague. Professor Richmond set the editor's letter aside for two or three months. He then decided to write a notice, but he could not refrain from a brief accompanying letter on the reason for his delay. He received the typescript back, refused!—G. R.

HOUSMAN CONSIDERED MAINLY AS A SCHOLAR

As it is my object to let my hearers now and again, where I can, behind the curtain which veils his personality from most, I will record for you his first impromptu words to a class as Professor of Latin at Cambridge. The appointment of this Oxford man had been first suggested by some of the younger of those present, and some of our elders may have been less delighted when it was made. It was the year in which the Cambridge Press had produced the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, an edition which encountered severe criticism. The Professor began his lecture, and after a few minutes a group arrived which had been misdirected by an erroneous notice in the 'University Reporter'—printed, of course, at the Press, but on the order of a higher power. He stopped till they were seated, and then said: 'Ladies and Gentlemen, the Cambridge University Press, having completed the publication of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, has taken to fiction on its own account.'

And he corrected the notice. This sentence sticks in my mind not because of its acidity or its unintentional injustice, but just because it is the one entirely infelicitous remark I ever heard him make—and it happened to be the very first for a few of his hearers. The true student of his work will perceive that slovenliness and inaccuracy are to him crimes against the Holy Ghost that call for merciless retaliation.

★ ★ ★ ★

Without probing into circumstances beyond my ken, I am driven to suppose that something more acute than the self-consciousness to which I have alluded left a sting embedded in his experience. One might guess that it was something like the sting left in Leopardi by the discovery that, though he was made for love, none would ever love him, because of his physical disabilities,¹ caused by precocious intellectual strain.

★ ★ ★ ★

I do not probe these matters, but offer my own guess, and leave you to yours.²

I mentioned Leopardi, to whom I have been turned by a chance remark of a friend. I do not think it is belittling Housman's rare gift of expressing one dominant idea with almost perfect craftsmanship and his controlled instinct not to wander from his central point, but rather like the Greeks to use his art in many variations on few and kindred themes, to say that when one sets him beside a giant like Leopardi, giant both in scholarship and in lyrical power, he seems a minor poet. He *was* a minor poet when he first appeared, but a most individual one. His work has stood the test of time, and is shown to have immortal qualities; but we must not lose our heads about him on that account.

... The great amount of his published work would astonish even many scholars. He edited not only all five books of Manilius, the difficult astronomer-poet who wrote in Tiberius' reign, but Juvenal and the ten books of Lucan, on a scale only less ample because he did not need to interpret to the same degree authors relatively familiar and intelligible. In Postgate's *Corpus of the Latin Poets* (vol. 1) he actually edited only the *Ibis* of Ovid, but his name continually

¹ I never heard of any physical disabilities.—G. R.

² I may perhaps be allowed to say that, as will have been seen, I entirely disagree with this passage, but Professor Richmond should be allowed his opinion, and he certainly supports it in his original paper with some ingenuity.—G. R.

appears in the *apparatus criticus* of other works of Ovid and of Postgate's own Propertius text. In a hand-list of his *adversaria* and reviews and articles, published by friends at Cambridge in April 1926, there were already 118 entries on Latin subjects, over forty on Greek, five on English. Practically the whole of the matter concerns poetry or the editors of poets.

Housman first forced himself upon the attention of other scholars by three articles on Propertius in the *Journal of Philology*, which were founded on Baehrens's fresh collation of the MSS. of that poet. He has always been more prepared than I should be to judge of MSS. evidence by report of others; it is his particular joy to find himself presented with material which those others have laboriously collected and then proved quite unable to judge and use. For his recent Lucan he accepted bodily the collations of Hosius, and then spent a happy time in prodding and ridiculing his benefactor in the Latin notes. In the case of Propertius he, at that time and later, put out a great number of graceful and ingenious emendations, while contending for a catholic view of the value of the various families of manuscripts. Baehrens made a cardinal error, I have even been forced to think, a dishonest error, in denying the antiquity of the one old MS. of Propertius, which Lachmann, its discoverer, had rightly seen to be of prime importance. Partly because of this, partly because Baehrens correspondingly exaggerated the value and antedated the writing of a pair of very late and interpolated MSS., I do not regard *nearly* all Housman's proposals as acceptable. Nevertheless my incomplete index refers the reader to Housman on thirty-three of my pages, and no one has contributed to the emendation of this poet much more than half as many plausible proposals. All this work, and Ovid was at about the same time also passing through his hands, the Germans of the day dismissed with the contemptuous phrase, *emendationes transmarinae*. It was not until the Lucan appeared that a review by a German admitted the pre-eminent brilliance of any of his work. The main reasons for their scorn really amount to three; first, that he is not a German—but let us be magnanimous and admit that the other two are more important still. He ran entirely counter to modern German dogma on these two interdependent matters; they hold that the oldest MS. of a writer *must* be the best authority, and that it is the duty of scholars to explain and translate, and, if this is not possible, still tacitly to accept, the oldest reading. These are dogmas which open scholarship to all, and the right to edit to anyone who can win the ear of the powers that be. For we are all equally capable of copying out or reproducing a manuscript, and of either attempting to explain or

leaving unexplained the most portentous errors of its scribe. It is quite another thing to be able to think in Latin and in poetry, and to concentrate upon each problem as it arises the knowledge of the poet's manner, style, thought, form, metrical usage, which only belongs to the true critic.

★ ★ ★ ★

Housman would say, first establish the inter-relation of all the MSS. which report honestly, of whatever century their writing is; then form an independent judgement of the degree of reliability shown by the MSS. or families of MSS. which are not descended from other extant MSS. or families. Then consider the creative criticism of the not very numerous band of past scholars in all lands who have really advanced the cause of accuracy by combining imagination and poetic taste with learning. And all the while, let your own imagination and insight have free play, keep an open mind on all the evidence, with the single aim of re-creating the mentality of the writer of the poem, in the environment of history, in relation to his predecessors, in the light of his influence on his successors. It must seem strange, to those who are not editors, that such a view of the nature and duty of the work should be held not merely heterodox and 'transmarine', but dangerous, worthless, damnable. It may seem strange that any crusade should have to be undertaken for such a cause. Yet it is safe to say that Housman and his pupils are almost the sole representatives of such a school of classical criticism in Europe or America, and that not one of his pupils but hails Housman as a supreme master.

As little as Bentley is he infallible; but Bentley was not a poet by nature. His learning is special rather than omnivorous, just as his Oxford career forecast. He just would *not* read what did not interest him, and wrecked his Schools for the passion he already possessed for scholarship, so-called pure. Yet where he is interested, where his chosen task demands it, he will probe to the depths, or to the heights. No one else since Bentley *could* have edited Manilius, because the ancient science of astronomy and astrology is a closed book to all but a few astronomers. No one now alive can criticize more than a tithe of his work on this poet, because his work is itself our chief source of information, and only a brain as keen as his own can grasp the material he offers to us.

★ ★ ★ ★

It was what Ellis and S. G. Owen *stood for* that Housman was for ever itching to attack and expose, a fatal amateurishness and muddle-headedness, which I must confess fills me with much the

same emotion. But it was all very well to read his account of dead men out of mind, or of Germans divided by an Ocean however shallow. It is another thing to wake up at Oxford and find your own self in a Housman review.

Having at length, in 1930, published the fifth book of Manilius Housman looks back upon his first volume at a distance of 27 years. I read the preface with a deep interest, and knowing the man and his work and aims, considered it to have been written with restraint. But I was not surprised to find that the reviewer in the *Classical Review* condemned the whole passage in which he discusses himself. Here are his words:

'Such points are moths and flecks. I come now with great reluctance to another matter. Mr Housman has been often taken to task for the tone of his animadversions on others. In this book, too, horror and scorn and indignation express themselves without reserve. Poor Robinson Ellis! Unhappy Mr Van Wageningen! Yet the world will understand or forgive what he says of others more readily than what he says of himself. This self-praise, which is in the sharpest contrast with the reticence of his manful poetry, would in any other profession be inconceivable, and in any other man laughable. The present writer (very conscious of his unfitness to undertake this review) honours Mr Housman on this side idolatry as much as any, but he believes that remarks like those on pp. xxxv-xxxvi and elsewhere do not forward the study of Manilius, and would infinitely better for Mr Housman's fame among later generations *have been suppressed*.'

I have laid stress so far upon Housman's philosophy of emendation. It would be quite unfair to leave you with the idea that his contribution to criticism has lain only on such debatable ground. His Juvenal provided the first reliable apparatus criticus for that poet and included only a few emendations, though most of these were excellent. He cleared up the punctuation and gave a new edge to some epigrammatic or rhetorical lines. (It has since been reissued with another retrospective preface.) In his Lucan there were still fewer emendations in proportion to the bulk of the work; but here revised punctuation worked marvels. So conservative a scholar as Mr. Duff could take this new text almost without reserve and translate it for the Loeb edition; and at last Lucan is a really intelligible poet—or rhetorician, if you prefer it. Even the ranks of

Tuscany broke into applause at the Lucan, the ranks which, as the Manilius slowly pursued its celestial course, have been reduced, not to eating their words, but to a discreet silence. Also Housman has cleared up for ever certain knotty points of orthographical usage, such as the spelling of the terminations of Greek proper names in Latin, and of adjectives formed from Greek.

Compared with, for instance, Robert Bridges, I do not call Housman a *musical* poet, nor do I regard his technique as 'perfect' in the same sense. Most of Housman is written to be *read*, as Catullus' hendecasyllables must have been written. I feel that Housman's sense of beauty has been so coldly restrained that it is not always even there, except in the outward form. It has never, I feel sure, been allowed to be a passion, as accuracy has been.

The appearance of *More Poems* was perhaps a mistake;¹ it is padded out with some inferior matter, and shows up almost unkindly the narrowness of the vein of inspiration.

Is it not strange, too, that he should have expressed preference for the Epicurean philosophy rather than the Stoic, and for Aristippus, the apostle of pleasure, above Epicurus? One would not guess it from his poems. But then neither from his poems nor his editions could one infer his dapper appearance and generally benevolent expression, which prompted Arthur Benson, after his first meeting with him, to say that he 'seemed to be descended from a long line of maiden aunts'. It was a remark in his own vein. He once said that the Victorian age, if Tennyson was to be preferred to Matthew Arnold, would be held by posterity to be an 'age flowing with milk and water'.

Any reservations here offered (for that is all they are) must be taken to mean no more than this, that admirers have created a legend which his poetry cannot quite always carry. By challenging no one, he has created a poetic region of his own where none approach; and it needs comparison with the giants to make quite clear that his poetic gift, so nearly perfect in its kind, so sure of a measure of immortality, is yet a less gift than his matchless contribution to scholarship.

O. L. RICHMOND.

¹ See pp. 363 and 369.

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Sarah Jane Williams ——— married ———
 born at Stroud, Co. Glouster, at Woodchester,
 24 August 1828, Co. Glouster
 died at Bromsgrove, Co. Worcester, 17 June 1858
 26 March 1871, buried at Littlehild
 daughter of the Rev John Williams,
 D.D. St Edmund Hall, Oxford,
 Rector of Woodchester, Co. Glouster,
 from 1833 to his death on
 30 June 1857.

Alfred Edward H.
 born 26 March 1859,
 of Littlehild, Co. Worcester
 M.A. St John's Hall, Oxford
 Professor of Latin in
 University College, London.
 since 1892, and in
 the University of London
 since 1907

Robert Holden H.
 born at Bromsgrove.
 30 August 1810,
 B.Sc. in 1838,
 died at Bath.
 2 May 1905.
 buried in Smallcombe
 Cemetery, Bathwick,
 Bath
 Unmarried.

Clarence Annie H.
 born at Bromsgrove
 23 November 1861,

Herbert Edward S
 born at Huddersfield;
 13 August ~~1867~~ 1868
 Lieutenant Clerk R.A. 1905.

Arthur Denis S
 born at Huddersf
 13 September 191

Edward Housman,	— married —	Lucy Agnes Housman
born at Kinver, Co. Stafford,	at Watlington	his first cousin,
25 January 1831,	in London	born at Freshford, Co. Somerset,
died at Bromsgrove, Co. Worcester,	26 June 1873.	9 th October 1823,
27 November 1894.		died at Hereford
Solicitor		12 th November 1907
Buried at Calthill,		buried at Calthill.
near Bromsgrove		

no issue

Katharine Elizabeth N.	David Williams N.	Laurence N.	George Herbert N.
born at Bromsgrove	born at Bromsgrove,	born at Bromsgrove,	born at Bromsgrove
10 December 1862,	16 January 1864,	18 July 1865.	19 July 1868, Son
married at Bromsgrove,	3 rd C.S., L.R.C.P. London.		King's Royal Rifle
13 August 1887,	Senior Medical Inspector		Mounted Infantry
to Edward William Symes,	of schools to the Worcester		killed in action at
he a late Forebay Fellow	County Council 1908,		Barakoulaagte, S
of St. John's Coll. Oxford,	married at Tardeligg		Spain, 30 October 19
Headmaster of King Edward's	Co Worcester, 24 July 1894,		buried on battlefield
School, Bath, since 1896.	to Jane, daughter of		Unmarried.
	Matthew Dixon,		
	of Tardeligg		

Clement Aubrey S.	Paul Victor Housman S
born at Banbury	born at Banbury
3 September 1893	27 November 1894

JONEL HAROLD CHIPPINDALL, A RELATIVE WHO WAS PREPARING A MUCH MORE EXTENSIVE CHART



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